

Regent condoles Pakistan

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Tuesday sent a cable of condolences to Pakistani President Farouq Ahmad Khan, expressing deep sorrow and regret over a recent bombing attack, which claimed the lives of 37 Pakistani civilians. The Regent said: "I received with shock and grief, the news of the cowardly terrorist attack against the brotherly people of Pakistan. As the government and people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan condemn this heinous act, we stand in solidarity with Your Excellency and the government and people of the brotherly Republic of Pakistan and we express to the families of the victims our heartfelt sympathy." On Sunday, the Regent sent a cable of condolences to President Suharto, of Indonesia expressing condolences over the passing away of Fatima Siti Hartina, wife of the Indonesian president. Prince Hassan delegated Jordan's Ambassador to Indonesia Louay Khashman to take part in the burial ceremony of Mrs. Suharto.

Jordan Times

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May Day holiday

The Jordan Times will not be published on Thursday/Friday (May 2 and 3) because of the May Day holiday on Wednesday (and Thursday being the regular weekly holiday of the paper). The next issue of the paper will appear on Saturday May 4. The chief editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish readers and advertisers a happy May Day holiday.

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White House rejects Likud's allegation

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The White House dismissed Tuesday Israeli opposition claims that the warm welcome Prime Minister Shimon Peres was given here was aimed at boosting his chances in the May 29 elections. "The president, as is well-known, would never attempt to interfere in the domestic political environment of another country," said White House spokesman Michael McCurry. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and top officials of the right-wing Likud Party have accused U.S. President Bill Clinton of openly supporting Mr. Peres, of the Labour Party, according to Israel's Yediot Aharanot daily. "Given the extraordinarily important events in the Middle East that are directly related to Israeli security, it's very timely for the president of the United States to meet with the prime minister of Israel," Mr. McCurry said. "It comes at a critical moment when we attempt to restore momentum in the peace process, and that is manifestly in the national interests of the United States," he said. "It has nothing to do in our view with Israeli politics."

Israelis find 60 petrol bombs

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — Israeli border guards arrested four people suspected of carrying out attacks after finding a stash of 60 petrol bombs, police said Tuesday. The four were suspected of firebombing Israeli vehicles, they said. Two other young suspects were released after questioning following the raid Monday night, the police said.

EU body seeks ties with Algeria

BRUSSELS (R) — The European Commission, reflecting the European Union's (EU) desire to bolster its fragile southern rim, said on Tuesday it wanted to open talks with Algeria on a wide-ranging "association accord." The accord forms part of a drive to strengthen the EU's Mediterranean policy and follows on from last November's Euro-Med conference held in Barcelona which called for better North-South economic ties and more political dialogue. The commission said in a statement the accord was aimed at underpinning economic and political reforms undertaken by the government of President Liamine Zouari who returned to power after winning last November's presidential elections.

PLO executive resigns over charter change

GAZA CITY (AFP) — A pro-Iraqi member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Executive Committee resigned his post Tuesday to protest against a historic Palestinian decision to delete anti-Israeli clauses in the national charter. Mahmoud Ismail, representative of the Arab Liberation Front (ALF) on the 18-member committee, said in a press release that he "withdrew" because the charter decision "contradicts the Palestinian struggle." The ALF favours "national unity as the basis of the struggle for achieving the rights of the Palestinian people" but could not go along with the decision on the charter, he said. Mr. Ismail was reelected to the Executive Committee last Friday by the same session of the Palestine National Council that approved amending the 1968 charter document to annul clauses calling for Israel's destruction. The 669-member PNC, from which the Executive Committee is drawn, voted overwhelmingly in favour of the amendments after Palestinian President Yasser Arafat insisted the move was needed in advance of final status peace negotiations with Israel.

Canan massacre victims buried in mass funeral

CANA (Agencies) — Tens of thousands of mourners gathered Tuesday amid scenes of overwhelming grief for the mass funeral of 102 people killed by an Israeli artillery attack on a U.N. refugee compound in this southern Lebanon village. Women and men sobbed, beat their chests and held up pictures of their dead loved ones decorated with plastic flowers as a convoy of around 40 Lebanese army and Red Cross ambulances wound its way slowly through the crowds into Cana. They carried the bodies and mutilated remains of 102 civilians, most of them women and children, killed by Israeli shells on April 18 in a massacre which drew international condemnation. Wails of anguish rose from the estimated 20,000 people crowded in the cemetery, lining Cana's narrow streets and perched on rooftops as church bells tolled and Islamic prayers rang out from mosques.

Boy scouts directed hose pipes on the crowds as many showed signs of collapse. Relatives of the victims crouched by gravesides, rocking back and forth and kissing the portraits of the dead, whose bodies had been kept in refrigerated trucks for 12

days awaiting burial.

The ambulances stopped at the entrance to Cana where the wooden coffins wrapped in Lebanese flags were carried shoulder high to the cemetery. There the bodies were removed and passed through hundreds of waiting hands to be laid to rest.

As the first body, wrapped in white linen and bearing a name, was lowered into a grave shouts of "death to America" and "death to Israel" rang out.

Workers at the cemetery — a municipal field and piece of land donated by a Lebanese expatriate in Africa — worked up to the last minute to prepare the graves which they covered with flowers and a slab of concrete.

Earlier, thousands had gathered at a Roman amphitheatre in the nearby port city of Tyre for an official funeral ceremony led by the head of Lebanon's Shiite Muslim Community, Sheikh Mohammad Mehdi Shamseddin.

He was flanked by Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and a throng of Muslim and Christian clerics, cabinet ministers and deputies.

The open caskets were carried by civil defense volunteers past a Triumph Arc built by Alexander the Great after he conquered Tyre in the 4th century B.C.

Fewer than half of the bodies of the Cana victims could be identified, and many were little more than charred pieces of flesh, Red Cross workers said.

Officials remain unsure of the exact death toll, but estimates range from 91 to more than 100.

Sheikh Shamseddin told mourners the massacre had united the Lebanese against a common enemy, Israel, and described the victims as "the heart and conscience of Lebanon and the Arab world."

"Israel wanted to destroy Lebanon but it only reinforced its unity," he said, adding "the Jews have carried out an Arab holocaust."

Israel said it was retaliating for a Hizbollah rocket attack launched from near the U.N. camp when several shells struck a compound sheltering hundreds of Lebanese refugees. Around 100 people were wounded, many seriously.

More than 100 graves were dug to accommodate the mutilated bodies of victims and the remains of at least

two other unidentified corpses found nearby.

Relief workers, preparing for the funeral overnight found the remains of three more victims, bringing an earlier toll of 98 dead to 102, 18 of them unidentified to the last moment.

Cana, like Tyre, was hung with banners denouncing the Israeli massacre. "This is the glory of Israel built on the corpses of the innocents of Cana," said one.

"Jesus achieved miracles in Cana while (Israeli Prime Minister Shimon) Peres carried out his massacres here," said another.

Many Lebanese believe that Cana is the spot where Jesus Christ turned water into wine, in his first recorded miracle.

Lebanon has declared April 18, the day of the attack, as a national day of remembrance for the dead.

One mourner, Mohammad Atweh, 50, wept for the daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren he lost in Cana. "The dead are dead but now we have to think of those injured like my granddaughter Hamida. She's 22. She lost a leg," he said.

Another man, Ali Bitar, arrived Monday in Lebanon

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Arafat to meet Peres, Clinton in Washington

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres was to meet Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Washington late Tuesday, Israeli and Palestinian sources said.

"Yes, they are going to meet tonight. The meeting is going to happen tonight," said Khalil Foutah, deputy director of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) office in Washington.

"Chairman Arafat is supposed to give a speech... for a group of Middle East peace and economic cooperation conference, chairman Arafat probably will meet Prime Minister Peres before that speech," Mr. Foutah said. "This is going to happen."

Israeli radio said earlier the two leaders would discuss the start of negotiations on a final peace settlement, opening Sunday in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba.

Mr. Peres was due to conclude a three-day visit here Tuesday and the last scheduled event was a (2200 GMT) reception for U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry at the Israeli embassy.

"After that, he is going to meet with Arafat, but we don't know where nor when," the source told AFP.

Mr. Arafat was expected in the U.S. capital on Tuesday. The meeting was not entirely certain, but "we are working on it," said the source, who asked not to be identified. "There is a very good possibility that they will meet," he added.

Mr. Peres was due to leave Washington for Paris late Tuesday. U.S. officials appeared to have been taken aback Monday by the announcement from Gaza City that the president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was coming to Washington to meet with President Bill Clinton.

After ruling out fitting the surprise visitor into the president's busy schedule Tuesday, the administration announced the president would meet with Mr. Arafat on Wednesday morning for an hour at the White House — making it an official visit.

Earlier, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said he received word Monday morning of the visit and would "probably" meet with Mr. Arafat during his stay, which the State Department described as a private trip.

U.S. officials also raised the possibility of a three-way meeting at the White House but that plan appeared to fall off the agenda as the day progressed.

Mr. Peres, who arrived here Sunday to sign a missile defence accord, was to go to the White House Tuesday, to sign an anti-terrorism agreement that would put in writing a commitment made by Mr. Clinton last month to help Israel fight attacks from radicals.

It said he had a lead of nine to 10 points over his right-wing rival, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, compared to just five points after the April 18 shelling of a U.N. base in Cana, South Lebanon, that killed 98 refugees.

"He has pulled ahead of Mr. Netanyahu, through the support of most of the Jewish electorate and many Arab-Israeli voters," Maariv said.

Israelis will elect their prime minister directly for the first time in the upcoming poll, along with their deputies Mr. Netanyahu is Mr. Peres' only competitor in the race.

The two opinion polls were ordered by Foreign Minister Ehud Barak, who is in charge of Mr. Peres' personal election campaign, and Interior Minister Haim Ramon responsible for the whole of the ruling Labour Party's campaign.

"Labour Party leaders place a great deal of importance on these two polls carried out after security arrangements were agreed for Israel's northern border after the grapes of wrath operation," Maariv said.

The agreement, criticised by Likud as not going far enough, brought to an end early Saturday Israel's 16-day military operation in Lebanon aimed at halting Hizbollah cross-border rocket attacks.

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GMT on Sunday at a large seaside hotel, foreign ministry spokesman Danny Shek said. Hassan Asfour, head of the Palestinian negotiations department, confirmed the plans.

The two sides were originally to sit down together on May 4. But the talks were put back a day as that date falls on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

According to Israeli officials, the opening will be essentially a one-day formality and negotiations will be adjourned until after Israel's May 29 general election so as not to interfere with campaigning.

In Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa hailed as a "positive sign" the fact that the talks were starting on time after Israel froze the peace process in the wake of a suicide bombing campaign in February and March.

He also said the decision by Israel's ruling Labour Party to drop its opposition to a Palestinian state, as well as the Palestinian National Council vote to scrub calls for Israel's destruction from its

1968 charter, "demonstrates the seriousness" of both sides.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak were optimistic about the prospects for progress, when the Palestinian president visited Cairo on Monday, Mr. Musa added.

Last week, Israel's ruling Labour Party dropped its veto of a Palestinian state, and the PLO voted to scrap articles in its charter that call for the destruction of the Jewish state.

But Mr. Peres has ruled out any partition of Jerusalem, which Israel regards as its eternal and indivisible capital. He has also called for Israel's annexation of parts of the West Bank and for Jewish settlements to be kept in place.

Mr. Abbas said he expected final status talks to last for two years and ultimately end in an independent Palestinian state.

A senior PLO official said unofficial talks on final status issues have been going on for three months.

(Continued on page 7)

Peres will win elections outright — secret surveys

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres is on course to win more than 50 per cent of the votes in May 29 general elections, enough to score a first round victory in the race for premier, two opinion polls showed Tuesday.

"Mr. Peres will win in the first round of voting thanks to the support of more than 50 per cent of electors," said the paper, based on the two secret Labour Party surveys published by the Maariv newspaper.

It said he had a lead of nine to 10 points over his right-wing rival, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, compared to just five points after the April 18 shelling of a U.N. base in Cana, South Lebanon, that killed 98 refugees.

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The sister of a slain 10 year-old boy cries and mourns below his photograph in a mass funeral at Cana village on Tuesday (Reuters photo)

Iran, Syria remain among Washington 'terrorism list'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Iran, Syria and five other states sponsored "terrorist" groups in 1995, the U.S. State Department said Tuesday, in a report that also highlighted a sharp increase in the number of Kurdish attacks.

The number of "terrorist" attacks worldwide rose to 440 last year from 322 but fewer deaths resulted from the violence, the report said.

According to the report, 165 people died in the attacks, compared to 314 in 1994. But the number of wounded increased tenfold to reach 6,291. The Sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway alone injured 5,500 in March 1995.

Iran was described as "the world's most active supporter of international terrorism" and topped the list of nations that will continue to be sanctioned under U.S. law for their policies.

Cuba, Iraq, Libya, Syria, North Korea and Sudan were also listed as states that "support, tolerate and engage in international terrorism," the report said.

With a total of 272 attacks in 1995, Western Europe was the hardest hit in 1995, according to the report.

Most of the violence was attributed to what the State

Department described as a "major increase" in arson attacks by the Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK) against property in Germany and Turkey.

The PKK, which is fighting for an independent Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey, has 10,000 to 15,000 full-time guerrillas, 60,000 to 75,000 part-time guerrillas and hundreds of thousands of sympathisers in Turkey and Europe, the State Department said.

U.S. interests abroad were increasingly targeted. There were 99 anti-American attacks in 1995, up from 66 in 1994, and 12 U.S. citizens were killed on foreign soil compared to four in 1994.

As in previous reports, the State Department harshly criticised Iran and said Tehran had escalated its attacks on dissidents while continuing to provide "arms, training and money to Lebanese Hizbollah and several Palestinian extremist groups."

Tehran also encouraged Hizbollah, Hamas and other Palestinian groups opposed to the Middle East peace process to form a "coordinated front to resist Israel and the peace process through violence and terrorism."

Iranian authorities also

reaffirmed the death sentence or fatwa on British author Salman Rushdie for his book the Satanic Verses, considered blasphemous by the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Syria has not been directly involved in attacks since 1986 but it provides safe haven and support for several anti-Israeli groups including Hamas, the Palestine Islamic Jihad and Hizbollah, the report said.

Damascus also allows the PKK to train its fighters in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley where most Syrian troops are deployed and PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan resides part-time in Syria.

Iraq uses "terrorism" against Kurds in the north including a thallium poison attack on the opposition forces that left an unknown number of dead in early 1995, the report said.

Cuba provides safe haven to "terrorists" as does North Korea, according to the State Department, while Sudan is a "training hub" for Middle East "terrorists," the report said.

Libya was blasted for its refusal to turn over two Libyan intelligence agents indicted for the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland.

THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
in Amman, has the sad duty to notify the passing away of
Mrs. Tien Soeharto
the Indonesian First Lady and wife of the Indonesian President,
on Sunday, April 28, 1996.
A Condolence Book will be opened for signature at the
Indonesian Embassy, South Um Uthainah (6th Circle),
next to Amra Hotel,
from Tuesday April 30 to Monday May 6, 1996,
from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Lebanese bear deep scars from 16-day Israeli assault

TYRE, Lebanon (AFP) — Lebanese civilians who spent terrifying days sheltering from a hail of Israeli fire will find it hard to erase the psychological scars, doctors said.

"Those who are the most traumatised are the children," said Dr. Hassan Faran at a Tyre hospital, as he tended his patients after Israel's 16-day war with Hizbollah guerrillas in Lebanon.

"Many people have lost all reference points in time and space, and all the patients have serious difficulties sleeping."

He recalled one four-year-old girl who was brought alone without her parents to his ward at the height of the Israeli bombardments. "She was completely bewildered and when we asked her who was doing all this she cried: 'Saddam Hussein'."

"What has happened will mark people for a long time, especially the children and we need to work hard to avoid lasting scars in the children."

In the Najem hospital in Tyre which took in the dead and the wounded from the Cana massacre on April 18, neurologist Abdul Rahman Samra estimated that more

than 100 people have been treated for psychological problems since the launch of Israel's assault on April 11.

"Some of them won't be released for at least six months at the minimum," he said. He cited one case of a 15-year-old girl who before the attacks was "mildly depressed" but has now been diagnosed as deeply schizophrenic.

There were horrific scenes of carnage at the U.N. base in Cana where over 100 people were killed and more than 100 wounded when Israeli artillery shells slammed into the camp where civilians had sought shelter.

One doctor appealed to the Lebanese authorities to stop showing the terrible images on television screens.

"I can't turn on my television any more for fear of seeing these monstrosities again," said Jacqueline, a Beirut librarian whose husband, a former soldier, had a heart attack when he saw the terrible images of twisted and broken bodies.

"I am on edge the whole time. I can't sleep anymore, I jump at the slightest noise," she added.

Ali Issa at the Tebnin hospital 30 kilometres east of Tyre, confirmed he had seen every kind of psychological disorder "shock, hysteria, fainting, loss of appetite."

Six people had been treated at the hospital in the past two weeks for nervous breakdowns after the buildings became a shelter for 800 civilians during the bombardments.

"We even had to abort four women who were in a state of shock," said gynaecologist Hussein Fawaz.

In the village itself farmer Ali, 32, who spent four days barricaded in a tiny room with nine people, virtually without food, said he was sure a doctor would tell him to spend a month in hospital.

"There have been lots of nervous breakdowns in the village. There are still people who cannot walk, others cannot talk or sleep," he said.

Two days after Saturday's ceasefire four people were still in the Tebnin hospital suffering from spells of sickness, pain in their joints and weakness all brought on by the sustained bombardments.



Soraya Ansari (Souhaila Andrawes) in a Hamburg court on Monday (Reuters photo)

1977 plane hijacker on trial in Germany

HAMBURG (AFP) — The sole survivor of a Palestinian group that hijacked a German airliner in 1977 went on trial amid heavy security here Monday and insisted she was being unfairly prosecuted.

Soraya Ansari — whose real name is Souhaila Andrawes Sayeh — was part of the four-member group whose exploit ended in bloodshed on the tarmac of Mogadishu airport in Somalia when the Lufthansa jet was stormed by crack German forces.

Ms. Ansari, 43, is charged with hostage-taking and complicity in the murder of the pilot, Juergen Schumann, whom the group shot in cold blood.

She was extradited to Germany last November after German investigators discovered she was in Norway, where she had settled in 1991, married and gave birth to a daughter.

The other hijackers were killed when the German forces stormed the Boeing 737, which had 82 passengers and a five-member crew aboard.

Crippled after being shot in the German rescue operation, she was sentenced by a Somali court to 20 years' jail in 1978 for the hijacking, but found freedom after two

years.

In a statement to the Hamburg court, the defendant said she was being unjustly prosecuted because had already been convicted of the murder of the pilot.

"I do not think that I am not guilty of the pilot's death," she said, speaking in Norwegian.

But she contrasted her fate to that of Nobel Peace Prize winners Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin. While "the whole world knows of their serious crimes," they were honoured and "I am to be punished twice."

She noted that Palestinian hijacker Leila Khaled had now been allowed to return home.

Forty-seven witnesses are due to testify, including several of the plane's passengers.

The hijackers' of the self-styled "Martyr Halimeh" commando had demanded the release of prisoners of Germany's ultra-left Red Army faction and members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The plane was commandeered after taking off from Palma de Majorca in Spain on October 13, 1977.

Sanction enforcers nab 76 vessels since '90

KUWAIT (R) — A U.S.-led naval patrol enforcing sanctions against Iraq found 76 vessels suspected of breaking the restrictions among the 10,000 vessels it boarded in the past 5½ years, the U.S. Navy said on Tuesday.

The multinational maritime interception force that has patrolled the Gulf and Red Sea since Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait on Sunday boarded its 10,000 vessels suspected of importing or exporting contraband cargo, a U.S. Navy Fifth Fleet statement said.

The vessel intercepted by the destroyer USS John Young was found to be empty and allowed to proceed, the statement said.

The Fifth Fleet is the main component of the force, which also has involved naval ships from France, Greece, Argentina, Britain, Norway, Spain, Denmark, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Italy, Saudi Arabia and Belgium.

"Since multinational operations began in August 1990, ships from 15 coalition countries have queried over 22,000 vessels, boarded 10,000 and diverted 573 under suspicion of carrying U.N. prohibited cargo, for having inaccessible cargo or because of improper documentation," the statement said.

"Of those, 76 were suspected sanctions violators and were turned over to member nations of the United Nations for disposition in accordance with U.N. guidelines."

Diplomats say ships found to be sanctions busting are normally turned over to Arab Gulf states where officials inspect the vessel, sell off any contraband oil or goods and deposit the proceeds in a U.N. escrow account.

Fifth Fleet Commander Vice-Admiral John Scott told a U.N. committee monitoring compliance with sanctions in February that countries agreeing to undertake on-shore inspections of such vessels included Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, the Kuwait news agency has reported.

Iraq protests strongly about the continued imposition of sanctions, particularly on oil, its main export, saying the penalties are causing severe suffering among Iraqis.

Iran has protested to the United Nations about what it calls the illegal presence in the Gulf region of the U.S. Navy.

In Dubai, a U.S. official said a tanker suspected of carrying 1,300 tonnes of Iraqi oil tried to evade U.N. sanctions by sailing along the Iranian coast before U.S. and other warships stopped it outside the Gulf.

The incident raises questions of whether Tehran tried to help Baghdad avoid the oil and trade sanctions, and is likely to be debated at U.N. headquarters in New York.

"It was the first incident where the multinational force tracked a vessel (suspected of carrying Iraqi oil) the entire length of the Gulf while it was in Iranian waters," the official said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Egypt to host conference on fundamentalism

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt is to host an international conference in July on the threat posed by religious fundamentalism, officials said Monday. The July 24 conference, sponsored by the highest Sunni Muslim authority in Egypt, Al Azhar, will group Muslim clerics, experts and Arab officials, said Mohammad Ibrahim Al Fayumi of Egypt's Ministry of Awqaf. He said it would focus on the "phenomenon of international terrorism" arising from fundamentalism and "the position of Islam and other religions towards religious extremism." Mr. Fayumi, quoted by the government daily Al Akhbar, added: "All the Awqaf and Islamic affairs ministries from Arab and Muslim countries, more than 40 muftis as well as many academics from 200 countries or international organisations will take part."

Non-religious cemetery under construction in Beer Sheva

BEER SHEVA (AFP) — Religious Affairs Minister Shimon Shetreet laid the foundation stone of Israel's first non-religious cemetery on Monday. Once it is built, the cemetery, in southern Israel, will be the final resting place for people of all religions and for those who choose not to be buried according to Jewish rites. Previously there was only the choice of Jewish, Christian or Muslim cemeteries, which posed a problem for non-Jews who asked to be buried alongside their Jewish relatives. Under Jewish tradition only Jews can be laid to rest in Jewish cemeteries. Seven non-denominational cemeteries will be built across the country, and six non-religious undertakers will be able to organise funerals, breaking a monopoly held by the Jewish orthodox Herva Kadisha company on Jewish funerals. Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein, who took part in the ceremony, said he hoped that Israelis soon would also be able to have civil marriages.

British defence secretary to visit Cyprus

NICOSIA (AFP) — British Defence Secretary Michael Portillo is to visit Cyprus at the end of May to tour the British sovereign bases on the Mediterranean island, the Foreign Ministry said Monday. But a ministry spokesman said "there are no plans" for Mr. Portillo to meet Cypriot President Glafos Clerides to offer apologies over the killing of Danish tour guide Louise Jensen, 23, by three British soldiers. Alan Ford, 26, Justin Fowler, 27, and Jeffrey Parnell, 23, were convicted of manslaughter, abduction and conspiracy to rape Jensen in September 1994. The three who were serving with the Royal Green-jackets at the British base of Dhokelia abducted Jensen after knocking her off a motorbike with their mini moke in the southeastern resort of Ayia Napa. They then beat her to death with an army shovel after trying to rape her. After the trial Jensen's father Paul said the family would sue. "It's not about money. The next step is to see if it is in any way possible to place responsibility on the British army and the British government," he said.

5 killed, 13 wounded in Somali fighting

MOGADISHU (AFP) — At least five people were killed and 13 others wounded when two armed groups, both loyal to Somalia warlord Mohammed Farah Aidede, exchanged fire following a dispute over the running of the port of Merca, south of Mogadishu, field radio reports said Tuesday. The militiamen used rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns during the confrontation inside the port, 100 kilometres south of Mogadishu on Monday, according to witnesses contacted by radio from Mogadishu. The fighting was triggered by a disagreement over the appointment, by General Aidede, of a new administrator for the port. Some militiamen are said to be opposed to new port official.

20 children poisoned by snack in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Twenty village children aged eight to 11 were rushed to hospital with food poisoning after eating food sold by a street trader, police said Tuesday. Twelve were being treated in a hospital near the village of Al Baradaa after eating the tainted dish on Monday but eight others were transferred to Cairo's anti-poison treatment centre. They had snacked on koshari, a popular rice, macaroni and lentil dish.

Khamenei grants amnesty to 1,050 prisoners

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei granted full or partial pardons Monday to 1,050 prisoners to mark the 'Eid Al Adha, the official news agency IRNA said. His decree, which pardoned some prisoners and commuted the sentences of others, came at the request of the head of Iran's judiciary, Mohammad Yazdi. The prisoners had originally been jailed by ordinary, revolutionary, military and clerical courts, IRNA said.

1 in 3 Israelis duck military service

TEL AVIV (AFP) — More than one in three young Israelis duck their military service, the ruling Labour Party said Monday. Thirty per cent of men and 50 per cent of women do not carry out military service, the head of Labour's parliamentary group Raanan Cohen told a conference on the armed forces here. Military service is obligatory for Jews but students at religious colleges and certain social cases are exempt. Women are often allowed out of duty because the army already has sufficient recruits. It lasts three years for men, followed by three to four weeks of reserve duty per year, and 20 months for women. Senior army officers voiced concern in February at a lack of motivation among recruits.

U.S. judge halts deportation of two Palestinian activists

LOS ANGELES (R) — A federal judge on Monday halted deportation proceedings against two Palestinian immigrants accused by the U.S. government of engaging in terrorist activities by supporting the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

U.S. District Judge Stephen Wilson ruled that federal authorities had singled out the pair for deportation while they had only engaged in non-violent humanitarian activities such as distributing pro-PFLP literature and engaging in political discussion protected by U.S. constitutional First Amendment rights of free speech.

The judge's decision was the latest move in a 10-year saga in which the U.S. Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) has sought to deport the two as well as five

other Palestinians and a Kenyan for supporting a "terrorist organisation."

They are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of southern California, the New York-based Centre for Constitutional Rights and the National Lawyers Guild, which announced Monday's ruling by Mr. Wilson in a joint statement.

The statement said the judge's ruling "casts serious doubt on the constitutionality of central provisions of the anti-terrorism law that President Bill Clinton signed into law last week, because it holds that fund-raising activity, made criminal by that law, is protected by the First Amendment."

Mr. Wilson also ruled that the government was selectively prosecuting the group that has become known as

the "L.A. eight," noting that it had not sought to deport many aliens who had supported organisations engaged in similar activities to the PFLP, such as the Nicaraguan contras and the Afghan mujahadeen.

In halting the INS's deportation proceedings against Khada Hamidi and Michel Shehadeh, the group's alleged leaders, Mr. Wilson rejected the government's arguments that they had provided "material support" to the PFLP.

Government prosecutors were not immediately available for comment.

The other members of the group are Mr. Hamidi's wife, Julie Mungai, from Kenya. Aiad Barikha, Niam Sharif, Ayman Bashir and brothers Amman and Amjad Obaid, all Palestinians.

Archaeologists rebuild 3,500-old jigsaw puzzle

LUXOR (AFP) — French experts are working out a giant jigsaw puzzle with 10-tonne stone blocks dating back 3,500 years in a bid to rebuild the pharaonic temple of Karnak in the southern Egyptian town of Luxor.

The latest piece to fall into place for the reconstruction team is the chapel of Thutmosis IV in the Karnak complex.

"This is our most complicated work since I came here," Francois Larche, an architect and director of the Franco-Egyptian Karnak Centre since 1990, told AFP. Workers had to identify and reassemble the 10-tonne blocks which made up the chapel, then borrow a crane from a nearby bridge project to lay the two massive ceiling slabs, at 35 tonnes each.

Karnak was added to constantly by later pharaohs who often cannibalised stones from earlier monument to use in their contributions to the 2,400 square metres complex dedicated to the sun god Amon.

In their reconstructions, experts must identify which blocks in the complex belonged to a particular chapel and then they must recreate exactly how they fit together.

Near the Thutmosis IV reconstruction stands the white chapel of Senostis I and the alabaster chapel of Amenhotep I, both rebuilt by another team in the 1940s. Missing blocks from the chapels are filled in by brick.

The French team has already begun work on the chapel of Thutmosis III and in October will begin on the

Red Chapel of the queen Hatshepsut (1505-1484 B.C.), the complex's largest at 100 square metres.

Hatshepsut's exquisitely engraved blocks of black granite and red quartzite from the two chapels wait for reassembly on giant benches after being removed from Karnak's third gateway where they had been reused.

Hatshepsut's chapel stood for only 20 years before being dismantled by her son-in-law, and a stroke of luck has helped workers to bring it back to life.

In early April, Mr. Larche uncovered by accident in a warehouse part of a mock-up of the chapel and eight photos showing the entire mock-up.

"It had been lost for 40 years. Now it will speed up

work. The proper assembly of two thirds of the blocks are shown in it," he said.

The centre also received in January a computer-imaging laboratory worth \$90,000 which will enable it to photograph and catalogue all the blocks in only two months.

Once the chapel's blocks are put in place, Larche plans to use the freed-up benches where they currently rest to store some 3,000 other engraved blocks from the complex which have begun to crumble under the sun.

A Swedish restorer, Anne-Marie Lind, has already begun wrapping the blocks in gauze for protection before being placed on the benches.

Mr. Larche points to a 70-kilogramme block as a crane lowers it into a courtyard of Thutmosis IV also

being rebuilt: "Look, 10 centimetres of the decorations have disappeared" through wear and tear.

"Once it is back in its wall, it will be protected," he said.

After five years on the site, Larche knows every stone by heart. Last year, workers found a stone which the rebuilders of the Amenhotep I chapel missed 50 years ago.

Workers then found it a perfect fit in a brick-work gap of the alabaster chapel.

The "open air museum" of Karnak features a number of monuments already rebuilt, such as a monumental wall of Amenhotep IV and a stone-gate of Thutmosis II.

The walls of the famed pillared hall have also been restored, as well as an Osirian chapel and the hidden chapel of Amon.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 73111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 The Finestones
14:30 Speed Racer
14:50 Bill Nyc the Science Guy
15:15 Dinosaurs
15:45 The Secret World of Alex Mac
16:00 Summary of the Italian Football League
17:00 News Flash
17:02 Children's Programme — Sophie
17:30 Series — L'Instit
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Sports Et Musique
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Evening Shade
20:00 Doc — Computer Chronicle/World Net
20:30 Varieties
20:35 Doc — Hunt
21:30 Doc — Hunter
22:00 News in English
22:25 The Bold and the Beautiful
23:10 Drama — "Airwolf"
23:59 Drama — Bugs

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedeh, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 634590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terrace Church Tel. 623666

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Efram Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 652526

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholic Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be hot and winds south-easterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be hot and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp. 20/34
Aqaba 25/40
Dorsets 21/33
Jordan Valley 24/39

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 32 Aqaba 38. Humidity

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN: Dr. Khalil Abdo 732320

Dr. Jari Abu Dhiab 738848

Dr. Walid Al Mawri 675485

Dr. Ahmad Manna 839756

Firas pharmacy 661912

Ferdows pharmacy 778336

Al Asena pharmacy 637055

Najweh pharmacy 636772

Al Sadam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmouk pharmacy 637660

Najrouh pharmacy 623672

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID: Dr. Ahmad Oanu 281741

Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA: Dr. Hafez Salafi 914144

Khalil pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate

Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192 621111 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 893290

Public Security Department 63021

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage 897467

Complaints 623101

Amman Municipality 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680101

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

09:35 Jeddah (RJ)

09:55 Jeddah (RJ)

10:25 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

10:55 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

11:30 Toronto, Montreal (RJ)

17:40 Istanbul (RJ)

18:00 Paris (RJ)

19:00 Brussels, Geneva (RJ)

19:05 Rome (RJ)

19:10 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)

Northern badia closes by-election candidate registration process

MAFRAQ (J.T.) — The nomination period for candidates in the May 20 by-elections in the Northern Badia District was ended on Tuesday, according to Mafraq Governor Ahmad Lawzi.

The by-election is being held to fill the Lower House of Parliament seat vacated by the death of the Deputy Nawaf Qadi.

Nine candidates have registered to contest the elections.

They are: Obeid Tareq Shabeel, Dahash Sharafat, Trad Qadi, Abdul Karim Sarhan, Qaher Qadi, Malah Masarhah, Abdullah Srour, Mohammad Azamat, Fahd Al Tawafsheh.

Mr. Lawzi said 24,000 citizens in the Northern Badia District have reg-

istered to vote.

They will have 50 centres in the districts towns and villages at which to cast their ballots, he said.

The late Mr Qadi died of a heart attack minutes after delivering a speech in parliament on March 2.

He was laid to rest in his home town of Hosha in the Mafraq Governorate. He was 73.

According to the Elections Law, the winner of the by-elections will retain the parliament seat until the end of the term of the present parliament.

Detainees released on Eid

AMMAN (Petra) — Upon His Majesty King Hussein's directives, the government Sunday released persons under administrative detention.

These detainees were being held in custody by the authorities and had not been tried.

Minister of Interior Awad Khleifat announced that provincial governors were instructed to release those persons held in administrative detention in their regions.

The minister said that the release of these detainees poses no threat or danger to the society or national security.

The number of those released was not made available.

Dr. Khleifat said the measure, taken on the occasion of the Eid Al Adha, was in conformity with pledges made by the government in its policy statement before Parliament.

Jordan celebrates Eid Al Adha

Regent attends prayers at King Abdullah the Martyr Mosque

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan joined the Islamic World in celebrating the first day of the Eid Al Adha (feast of sacrifice) on Sunday with religious ceremonies in mosques throughout the country.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, joined worshippers for prayers at the King Abdullah the Martyr's Mosque in Abdali accompanied by Royal Family members, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, Deputy Speaker of the Senate Zeid Rifai, House Speaker Saad Hayel Srour, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Abdul Hafez Marei Kaabneh, senior government officials and army officers.

After the prayers, the Regent exchanged Eid greetings with the congregation and later visited the tombs of the late King Abdullah and King Talal.

Also on Sunday, Prince Hassan received well-wishers at Raghadan Palace.



The smiling faces of Eid in Jordan



Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and Princess Sarvath visit with their daughter HRH Princess Sumaya, her husband Nasser Judeh and their grandchildren, twins Tareq and Zein Al Sharaf, and Ali who was born on April 28. His Majesty King Hussein, who is currently on a visit to South Africa, telephoned the happy family to congratulate them on the joyous event and wish them all life's blessings. (photo by Boghos)

Clockwise are the faces of Eid Al Adha in Amman as seen through the lense of Yousef Al 'Allan



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AILWAY

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Fate of new Chechenya rebel leader still unclear

MOSCOW (AFP) — The pro-Moscow Chechen government Tuesday backtracked on its assertion that Zelimkhan Yandarbyev, the new leader of the Chechen separatists, had been killed.

"The report is being checked," government spokesman Rustan Martagov was quoted as saying by Russian ORT state television.

Meanwhile, Moscow-backed Chechen leader Doku Zavgayev announced that Russian President Boris Yeltsin intended to visit Chechenya at a date to be fixed. The Kremlin said it had "no information" on such a visit, however.

Chechen separatist officials dismissed the earlier claim by Mr. Martagov that Mr. Yandarbyev, who took over from slain rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev last week, was killed in fighting among rival Chechens Sunday near the southwestern town of Urus-Martan.

Yusup Soslanbekov, chairman of the Confederation of Caucasus Peoples, said the reports of Mr. Yandarbyev's death had been put out by the pro-Moscow Chechen government to suggest a rift among the rebels that would make it impossible to hold negotiations with them, according to Interfax News Agency.

Doku Makhayev, commander of rebel forces in western Chechenya, told AFP Monday that Mr. Yandarbyev "is in very good condition."

"There was no shootout. It's yet

another lie," Mr. Makhayev said.

Interfax also noted that the separatist television, broadcasting from rebel-held areas, had made no mention of the reports on Mr. Yandarbyev's fate late Monday.

Mr. Yandarbyev, 44, took over as separatist leader after Dudayev was killed on April 21 in a village a few kilometres south of Urus-Martan. Separatist leaders say Dudayev, 52, died when a Russian air-to-ground missile locked onto the signal from his satellite telephone.

The separatists have stepped up attacks on Russian forces and the Moscow-installed authorities since Dudayev's death, but a "well informed source" quoted by Interfax in the Chechen capital Grozny said separatist military commander Aslan Maskhadov had met a member of the pro-Moscow government Monday.

"The results of the meeting are being kept secret, but one thing is definite — contacts were established with separatist leaders," said the source.

The meeting, concerning the conditions for starting negotiations between the rebels and Mr. Zavgayev's government, took place 30 kilometres south of Grozny, the source said.

On March 31 Mr. Yeltsin unveiled a peace plan to end 16 months of bloody conflict in the restive Muslim republic in the north Caucasus.

The plan called for a halt to Russian military operations — which was never carried out — a gradual with-

drawal of Russian forces and negotiations, through mediators, with Chechen separatists.

Mr. Yeltsin named Tatarstan President Mintimer Shaimiyev, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev and King Hassan II of Morocco as possible mediators.

A state commission set up by Mr. Yeltsin to implement his peace plan met in Moscow Tuesday.

Since Dudayev's death the separatists have left the door open for peace talks, with the condition that it be established who ordered the assassination.

Russian forces in Chechenya continued pounding the rebel stronghold of Goikoye overnight with artillery. The village, about 25 kilometres south of Grozny, has been devastated by Russian shelling in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, negotiations continued between the local authorities in Shali, some 25 kilometres southeast of Grozny, and Russian forces surrounding the town. The Russian authorities have alleged that armed rebels are still in Shali.

Russian troops were sent to Chechenya in December 1994 in a bid to crush Dudayev's independence drive.

Faced with international pressure and the upcoming June presidential elections, Mr. Yeltsin is keen to achieve a breakthrough toward ending the conflict in which more than 30,000 people, mostly civilians, have died.

Sinn Fein and IRA under pressure to renew ceasefire

ADARE, Ireland (R) — IRA guerrillas were under renewed pressure from the Irish government Tuesday to renew the truce that would allow their political wing, Sinn Fein, a seat at all-party Northern Ireland peace talks in June.

Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring suggested Monday that the issue of disarming the IRA, a major obstacle in the Northern Ireland peace process, be sifted out of the all-party talks and dealt with by "an independent outside agency."

He said that getting the IRA to hand over its weapons, including stocks of the Czech-made Semtex plastic explosive, was so crucial that "this approach should be explored with all the relevant parties as of now."

But Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble, a leading spokesman for the Protestant majority in British-ruled Northern Ireland, dismissed Mr. Spring's proposal, telling BBC Radio: "I don't see any merit in it at all ... I think it is very foolish of Mr. Spring to raise the hare at this issue."

Mr. Spring's comments to an Anglo-Irish parliamentary meeting in southern Ireland were the latest plea by Dublin to get the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to restore a 17-month ceasefire and ensure Sinn Fein's voice is heard at the talks.

They followed similar appeals by U.S. President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister John Major not to miss out on what the three governments say is the best chance of a peace agreement in more than two decades.

Mr. Spring said the talks offered the first real opportunity for all sides to sit and work out a new start between Irish nationalists such as Sinn Fein, which wants an end to British rule, and Protestant Unionists who want to maintain it.

"It would be tragic, for that reason, and for political confidence generally, if the

credibility of the negotiating process were to be in any way undermined," he said.

Government sources said Dublin was also seeking to get ex-Senator George Mitchell, who is seen by Irish nationalists as an honest broker, appointed as a chairman of the talks.

Mr. Spring said the proposal was only at a very early stage but it was said by aides to be an attempt to persuade the IRA and Sinn Fein that its interests would not be steamrollered by Unionists at the negotiating table.

If there were inclusive talks, "no-one need rise from the table having to look over their shoulders at those certain to reject the outcome because they were not there," he said.

The IRA began bombing London in February to undermine a peace process it says is being masterminded by Unionists to force an IRA surrender and banish talk of Irish unification.

Mr. Spring addressed Sinn Fein and IRA leaders in a speech because both Dublin and London are refusing ministerial level contact with Sinn Fein until the truce is restored.

Former British Northern Ireland Secretary Michael Mates, attending the Adare conference, declined to comment to reporters after admitting at the weekend that he had held secret but inconclusive talks with Sinn Fein.

The IRA leaders in a series of brief statements have accused London of bad faith and blocking tactics after its first extended ceasefire failed to win a firm date for the all-party peace talks.

Mr. Spring said that now a date for the negotiations had been agreed, there was no reason for the IRA to pursue its campaign of bombing British targets to signal its frustration.

Army makes snow to save Mongolia capital from fire

TERELZ, Mongolia (R) — The Mongolian army fired rain-making shells into the sky Tuesday, triggering a 15-cm snowfall that put out a huge fire threatening to engulf the capital Ulan Bator.

The snowfall extinguished the blaze 30 kilometres from Ulan Bator, but fires elsewhere that have devastated Mongolia's forests and pastures continued to rage, officials said.

"The snowfall started 20 minutes after we shot the first bullets," said an army officer returning from Terelz Nature Reserve where the shells were fired before daybreak.

"The fire spread to about 30 kilometres from Ulan Bator in the night, but the snow put it out," Badarch, the mayor of Terelz, Mongolia's most popular tourist destination 40 kilometres from Ulan Bator, told Reuters.

Three weeks of fires have killed at least five people and destroyed eight million hectares (19.8 million

acres) of forest and pastureland, causing as much as \$1.8 billion of damage to the fragile Mongolian economy, officials say.

The severity of the fires, which have been declared a national catastrophe and prompted calls for international aid, has been blamed on an almost snowless winter that has left forests and pastureland tinder-dry.

In a dramatic effort to save the capital, the army fired the rain-making shells after Terelz's 600 residents saved their homes and idyllic nearby valleys but failed to stop the fire advancing on Ulan Bator because of strong winds.

Under the direction of meteorologists, soldiers fired scores of the shells that exploded in the clouds and caused precipitation, leaving large areas around Ulan Bator blanketed under snow up to 15 centimetres deep.

In Gachuurt, a town 30 kilometres northeast of Ulan Bator, an 8-cm snowfall extinguished a 12-kilometre wide blaze that fire-

fighters and local residents had failed to bring under control.

"(Authorities) are now doing the final extinguishing of small fires in a few spots that are still smouldering," Gachuurt Mayor Nyamdorj said by telephone.

Large areas of sparsely populated northern and eastern Mongolia were burning.

In Moengon County, 120 kilometres northeast of Ulan Bator, 1,400 firefighters were struggling to bring a huge fire under control.

They saved the county capital, where 2,000 people live, but were still fighting fires burning in the nearby Hentii Mountains.

In Jargalant, Borneur and Bayantsogt counties, from 50 kilometres-70 kilometres from Ulan Bator, another big fire was raging.

"All forests have burnt, and 250 people are fighting the fires now," one local official said by telephone.

Wildfires rage across U.S. southwest

LOS ANGELES (R) — Wildfires fuelled by searing temperatures and gusting winds raged across the U.S. southwest early Tuesday, including one blaze threatening the Los Alamos Nuclear Research Plant in New Mexico.

A forest fire swept over 800-year-old Anasazi Indian archaeological sites near Los Alamos and fires lit up the night skies in southern California and Arizona.

However, nuclear officials said even if the fire reached the site where the first atomic bomb was built, there was no public health risk.

In Ventura County, about 100 kilometres north of Los Angeles, nearly 10,000 acres (4,047 hectares) of the Topatopa Mountains were blackened by fire and other wildfires were raging to the east of the city and near the Mexican border east of San Diego.

One house and three mobile homes were destroyed, two schools were evacuated and at least five firemen were injured fighting the blazes in California.

Soaring temperatures in some inland canyons, coupled with hot Santa Ana winds gusting at 100 kilometres per hour were blamed for turning forests and undergrowth into tinder traps.

Helicopters dropped water on the fires around the town of Rubidoux, east of Los Angeles and in the Otay Mountains outside San Diego, where about 1,000 acres (404 hectares) of forest burned.

In Arizona, a fire consumed 12,000 acres (4,850 hectares) of desert land east of Phoenix and the city was blanketed by smoke Monday.

Two further fires torched 4,000 acres (1,620 hectares) of land in Arizona's Fort Apache Indian Reservation.

In New Mexico, a stubborn wildfire has torched more than 14,500 acres (5,868 hectares) of pines and shrubland since it began last Thursday.

It blazed across one-eighth of the Bandelier National Monument, a spectacular park which houses about 3,400 Anasazi Indian archaeological sites.



Rescue workers prepare to dive in the waters off Cobb Island to search for the body of former CIA director William Colby, who is feared to have drowned. Mr. Colby's house is in the background (Reuter photo)

U.S. Coast Guard suspends search for ex-CIA chief Colby

WASHINGTON (R) — The Coast Guard suspended its search late Monday for former CIA Director William Colby, who apparently vanished on a canoeing outing near his weekend home at Rock Point, Maryland, south of Washington.

Police divers plan to resume their search Tuesday after calling off their operations after darkness fell. But the Coast Guard said it is suspending the search by helicopter and rescue craft "pending further developments."

"We are suspending the search unless something fresh develops," said Lt. J.G. Rob Keith, a spokesman in Baltimore.

Despite an extensive search by the Coast Guard, Maryland State Police and other rescue teams, no trace of Colby has been found.

His wife Sally, a former U.S. Ambassador to Grenada and Barbados, returned from a trip to Texas and has given police information on the routes that Colby liked to row, a police spokesman said.

Police said they were operating on the assumption Colby, 76, had fallen victim to a boating accident and not foul play.

His sudden, mysterious disappearance stirred inevitable reminders of the espionage underworld he once dominated as director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from September, 1973, to January, 1976.

The Coast Guard said it had received a call from a Colby neighbour in southern Maryland about 7:30 p.m. Sunday, reporting him overdue after a canoe trip that he apparently began Saturday night.

Authorities in Charles County, Maryland, said Colby apparently had planned to be

away only briefly and had left his radio and computer on when he went out.

At least a dozen divers plumbed the depths and combed the shores of the Potomac River and its Wicomico tributary close to where Colby's overturned green canoe was found by a local boater just off Colby's dock about noon Sunday.

Officials in Charles County, where Colby had a home facing Cobb Island, said they had no reason to suspect foul play.

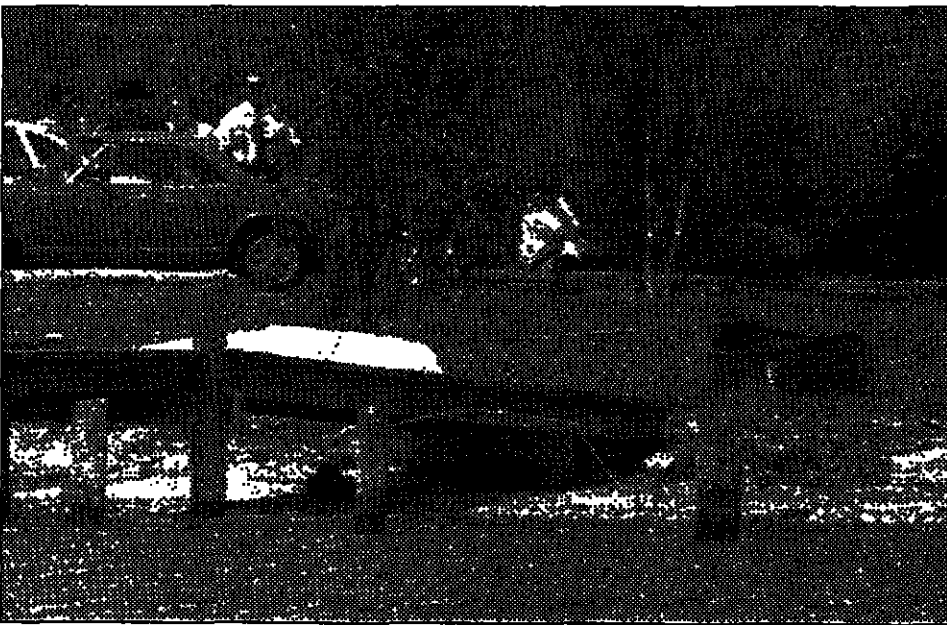
"Right now we're viewing it as an accident," Sheriff Fred Davis told reporters. "But I will not rule out foul play. You never rule that out till we finally locate the individual and get an autopsy done. But right now it is being considered as an accident, a boating accident."

Colby, who parachuted into German-occupied France in 1944 as a U.S. operative, went on to mastermind many of the CIA's clandestine operations in Indochina as head of its Far East Division from 1963 to 1968.

But he is perhaps best known for having blown the whistle on CIA abuses of its power shortly after President Richard Nixon appointed him as director in May, 1973.

At that time, he turned over to Congress the CIA's so-called "family jewels" — records of questionable operations that included plans to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro, the unauthorized opening of Americans' mail, illegal domestic phone tapping and psychedelic drug experiments on unwitting Americans.

Some of Colby's CIA colleagues regarded him as a turncoat for his role in this exposure.



A canoe (right) is shown on the grounds of former CIA director William Colby's house as law enforcement officials appear in the background (left). The canoe is believed to have been found in the waters near Mr. Colby's home (Reuter photo)

Top army general killed by Khmer Rouge in northwest Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The military commander in charge of the Cambodian government's recently aborted dry-season offensive against Khmer Rouge guerrillas has been killed by the rebels, military sources said Tuesday.

General In Sidare was killed in a Khmer Rouge ambush Monday afternoon in the northwest province of Battambang about 20 kilometres north of the Khmer Rouge stronghold of Pailin at Phnom Koan Damrei (Baby Elephant Mountain), they said.

The general and nine other soldiers were riding back from the mountain on an armoured personnel carrier (APC) after inspecting a new outpost when six or seven guerrillas came out of the jungle and fired B-40 rockets at them, military sources said.

Six of the soldiers including the general were killed and four wounded, three seriously, said Gen. In Sidare's brother, General In Dara, who commands the army's Division 2 which is based in Battambang province.

"They did not see the Khmer Rouge coming," Gen. In Dara said. "They ambushed and ran away. My brother was hit in the leg and shrapnel got into his stomach."

Gen. In Sidare, 39, was the commander of Cambodia's Fifth Military Region, based in Battambang which also includes the northwest provinces of Pursat and Banteay Meanchey.

He had led the latest offensive against the guerrillas under the direct command of the

Royal Cambodian Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Keo Kim Yan.

That offensive, which began in January against the Khmer Rouge bases of Pailin and Phum Klar Ngap (Dead Tiger Village) further northwest in Banteay Meanchey province, was halted in mid-April when the onset of the monsoon season began to hamper the army's ability to move heavy equipment.

The offensive ended with the government gaining ground from the rebels.

The five others killed in the ambush were cremated in Battambang, but Gen. In Sidare's body was brought back to Phnom Penh where it is now lying at the Ministry of Defense with a 24-hour guard.

Gen. In Sidare is to be cremated Friday near the royal palace at a site reserved for the funeral services of Cambodia's most important national figures. Both of the country's prime ministers are expected to attend.

The general, who is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter, joined Cambodian forces allied with the Vietnamese in 1978 and helped to topple the Khmer Rouge regime a year later.

He then served in the army of the Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea and subsequent state of Cambodia governments before the 1993 U.N.-backed election. After the vote all fighting forces were integrated, except the Khmer Rouge who boycotted the election.

Zoo mascot panda dies

MADRID (AFP) — Chu Lin, the first giant panda born in captivity in Europe, died Monday in Madrid from a prostate infection, the zoo authorities announced. The body of Chu Lin will be preserved and exhibited at the entrance to the zoo beside his mother, Shao Shao who died in 1983 five years after being given to the Spanish royal couple by the Chinese government. Chu Lin was born 13 years ago after his mother had been inseminated artificially with the sperm from a panda in London Zoo. Every year, Madrid Zoo held a party for Chu Lin's birthday and children were allowed to approach him to "congratulate" him. He died just as the zoo had finally found him a suitable mate after years of looking.

Girl leaves hospital 'on road to smile'

LOS ANGELES (R) — A 7-year-old girl born without the ability to show facial expressions has left hospital after surgery that doctors hope will enable her to smile for the first time — just in time for her birthday. "She's on the road to a smile," a hospital spokeswoman said of Chelsey Thomas. Chelsey underwent 10 hours of microsurgery last Tuesday in which doctors transplanted a nerve from her thigh into her right cheek because she was born with a neurological condition that left her with what the spokeswoman described as a "mask-like face."

Shanghai residents queue up for private lines

SHANGHAI (R) — An average of 1,000 Shanghai households apply each day for private telephones, with 132,000 on the waiting list, the Wen Hui Bao newspaper said. In the first quarter of 1996, the authorities installed 240,000 private telephones, taking the total in the city at the end of March to 2,477 million, it said. Surveys have found that 70 per cent of Shanghai residents regard a private telephone as essential for their daily life, while 10 years ago most people believed only business people needed one, it added.

Snooker player gets a break

SHEFFIELD, England (R) — Irishman Ronnie O'Sullivan escaped being thrown out of the World Snooker Championship after admitting assaulting a tournament official. The World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association handed him a suspended two-year ban and fined him £20,000 (\$30,000) after he had admitted Sunday's assault on press officer Mike Ganley following an argument. O'Sullivan, 20, apologised at a disciplinary hearing and promised that in future he would be a "model professional and an ambassador for the game." He agreed to pay a further £10,000 to two charities.

German farm minister ducks mad cow issue

LUXEMBOURG (R) — German Chancellor Helmut Kohl may have swallowed the diplomatic joke played by British Prime Minister John Major and eaten British beef in London, but German Farm Minister Jochen Borchert felt no such compunction in Luxembourg. "I eat German beef with great relish," he told reporters who asked him at a meeting of European Union farm ministers if he would eat British beef. He repeated the reply when asked what he eats when he is in England. Undeterred, the reporters threw in the complication that he might fail to find any German beef in Britain. "Then I eat duck. I like eating duck," Mr. Borchert replied.



An aerial view of the burnt out guest house where a gunman held hostages after the shooting massacre of 35 people at Port Arthur in the island state of Tasmania (Reuter photo)

Catholic priest defends himself in Nazi holocaust controversy

PARIS (AFP) — A Catholic priest who is a virtual folk-hero in France defended himself Tuesday against storm of criticism over his backing for a controversial writer indicted for revisionist views on the Nazi holocaust.

Abbe Pierre, an 83-year-old champion of minority rights, said he had never sought to falsify the Jewish genocide in backing writer Roger Garaudy and calling for more historical research into the shoah.

"I firmly condemn all those who for various reasons seek in whatever way to deny, falsify, or portray as unimportant the shoah which will always remain an indelible mark of shame in the history of our continent," a statement said.

He said he realised the time was not right for new research into the holocaust. "Considering that the necessary climate does not exist at the moment, I have decided not to ask for a new meeting of historians aimed at establishing more perfect knowledge of history," he said.

The cleric has sparked fierce protests in recent days by backing Garaudy, who claims the holocaust "myth" had been used to place Jews "above all international law." Garaudy, a former Communist leader who converted to Islam, was charged last week for "negating crimes against humanity" by his book *The Founding Myths Of Israeli Politics*.

But Abbe Pierre has refused to withdraw his support for him. In a newspaper interview Monday Abbe Pierre defended his backing for Garaudy. While insisting he was not anti-Semitic, he said he wanted to "question a taboo" by opening the holocaust to serious historic investigation.

He insisted that organisations such as the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICRA) were wrong to refuse any debate over the issue.

"A body like LICRA declares in an absolutely dogmatic way that it is a sacred subject and that any historical research — such as that which might seek to better

understand the Inquisition or the Crusades — is unnecessary.

Nazi gas chambers were an example of issues that should be open to historical research, he said. "It appears probable that all the cells which the Nazis planned to build were never actually constructed," he told *Liberation*.

On Tuesday the French Catholic Church joined a growing army of critics denouncing the cleric.

The Bishops' Conference said in a statement that it "deplores the commitment of Abbe Pierre alongside Roger Garaudy" and "refuses the very serious confusion and the scandal which has resulted from the support which has been brought."

It added that Abbe Pierre was abusing the moral authority bestowed on him. The church "cannot accept being understood in this way," it said, adding that "the moral backing... and authority" of priesthood "commit the Church of France in the view of public opinion," it said.

The bishops' comments were only the latest condemnation of the curate over the issue. On Monday LICRA said it was "saddened" by his views and called on Abbe Pierre to quit the group.

Henri Hadjendberg, head of the French Jewish umbrella group CRIF, said Abbe Pierre was "expressing theories of an outdated Christian anti-Judaism."

The curate was however unrepentant Tuesday. He "did not intend to cast doubt in any way on the atrocious reality of the shoah and the millions of Jews exterminated because they were Jews," the statement said.

He insisted that he would only withdraw his support from Garaudy if he reneged on promises made.

"Roger Garaudy has orally and in written form pledged to acknowledge any error which is proved against him. It is only if he does not keep to this pledge that, with sadness, I would withdraw my confidence from him," he said.

Tigers demand army withdrawal ahead of Sri Lanka peace talks

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas Tuesday formally demanded the withdrawal of government forces from their former bastion of Jaffna before any talks could be held through international mediators.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said Sri Lankan government forces were involved in a "war of aggression" and declared a cessation of hostilities was necessary to create an atmosphere for peace.

"The LTTE cannot participate in a political dialogue unless Sri Lanka puts an end to military aggression and occupation and withdraws troops from the occupied territories in the Jaffna peninsula," the LTTE said.

The statement, issued from the LTTE's London office, came just a day after the group called for Swiss intervention to end the drawn-out separatist war and arrange a truce.

The Colombo government has dismissed the call as "irrelevant."

"We urge the international community to use their good offices to impress upon the Sri Lankan government to give up the military option and create conditions of normality conducive to the peace process and a negotiated settlement," the latest LTTE statement said.

The Sri Lankan government said the question of a truce did not arise, because the security forces merely sought to free Tamil civilians from the rebels' dictatorial grip.

"The LTTE call is irrelevant," a Sri Lankan government spokesman said. "The fighting is by the Tigers. The government can talk directly with the Tamil people."

The spokesman said that the government's political package aimed at ending the separatist conflict by granting greater autonomy to minority Tamils could be discussed with tens of thousands of Tamils

now returning to their homes.

Chief military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe said the Tigers had realised the virtue of talks after the severe setbacks they suffered at the hands of the advancing army in the Jaffna peninsula, the former Tiger citadel.

The Tigers, in talks with President Chandrika Kumaratunga between October and April last year, rejected an offer from France to provide mediation.

Meanwhile Sri Lanka's Roman Catholic Church withdrew its support for the security forces' drive against Tamil Tiger guerrillas Tuesday and said there cannot be a military solution to the country's civil strife.

The Catholic Bishop's Conference in Sri Lanka joined a chorus of pro-Tamil rebel organisations in a statement calling for talks between the government and the LTTE.

"We are of the view that war and violence even if perpetrated in the name of peace or human rights will not solve problems," the Catholic bishops said in their latest statement, a sharp contrast to their earlier position.

In December, the church issued a statement tacitly supporting the military campaign against the LTTE in the northern Jaffna peninsula and quoted from scriptures to justify the war.

"War is being fought to bring about peace, and this seemingly contradictory statement has been explained to carry its proper meaning which finds justification in many events in the past," the church said in December.

The Catholic leadership had also ordered all Roman Catholic Churches to give their Christmas collections to the National Defence Fund set up by President Chandrika Kumaratunga to care for wounded soldiers.

Clinton targets U.S. youth in new anti-drug plan

MIAMI (R) — Taking his cues from a well-worn political playbook, President Bill Clinton Monday unveiled a new national strategy to fight drug abuse, which drains more than \$100 billion a year from the U.S. economy.

Like many previous plans to combat a social blight blamed for much of the crime and violence in America, Mr. Clinton's five-pronged strategy places top priority on halting an upward trend in drug use by young people.

"The most perplexing problem we face in this area is this: While the (overall drug use) rate has gone down, drug usage among people under 18 has gone up," Mr. Clinton told students at George Washington Carver Middle School.

He said he chose to visit the school "because of what you have done: Zero guns, zero assaults, zero incidents of drug-related violence, zero drugs."

"That's where America ought to go, and where America can go," said Mr. Clinton, who admitted during the 1992 presidential campaign that he had once smoked marijuana as a youth, but did not inhale.

Mr. Clinton's strategy seeks to:

- Motivate America's youth to reject illegal drugs and substances;
- enhance public safety by reducing drug-related crime and violence;
- reduce health, welfare and crime costs from illegal drug use;
- shield America's borders from drug trafficking, and
- break up foreign and domestic sources of supply.

The new strategy, which will be implemented by Retired Army General Barry McCaffery, a U.S. war hero recently named to lead the fight on drug abuse, also calls for ending the spread of Methamphetamine, or "Meth."

In Washington, Republican congressional leaders said they welcomed Mr. Clinton's initiative but criticised him for what they said was a lack of leadership on drugs over the past three years.

"Bob Dole and congressional Republicans will do what it takes to provide General McCaffery with whatever support he needs. The question for the nation is will Bill Clinton do the same?" Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch of Utah said at a news conference.

New York Representative Ben Gilman, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, called Mr. Clinton's plan, "old wine in new bottles."

Australian charged in mass murder case; 35 killed

HOBART, Australia (R) — Australian Martin Bryant, described as a wealthy and eccentric loner, was charged Tuesday with one count of murder in a shooting massacre at a tourist site which claimed 35 lives.

Police threw a security cordon around Royal Hobart Hospital and put Mr. Bryant in an isolated section, fearing revenge attacks by angry local residents after the shooting spree Sunday when in one bloody hour 32 people were killed and 19 wounded.

The words "an eye for an eye" appeared on a hospital wall and the hospital received threatening phone calls after Mr. Bryant was brought in Monday from the massacre area, the former penal site of Port Arthur 50 kilometres southeast of the Tasmanian capital Hobart.

"There has been at least one veiled threat and this person (Bryant) may be in some danger," said Tasmanian Assistant Police Commissioner Luppé Prins. "We are aware of the possibility of reprisal and that's why we have taken precautions."

At a five-minute bedside court hearing attended by a court magistrate, prosecutor and legal aid officer, Mr. Bryant, 28, was formally charged with murder as he

lay sedated on his stomach.

Mr. Bryant, being treated for burns to his back and buttocks received when fire gutted a cottage guest house where he held three hostages overnight Sunday, was not required to enter a plea. He was remanded to appear in a local court May 22.

The charred remains of the three hostages were in the burnt out guest house. The third body was only found Tuesday to take the death toll to 35.

A court official said Mr. Bryant did not speak during Tuesday's hearing. "He was certainly awake and aware of what was going on," said court official David Bliss.

"There is a possibility of further charges. I can't tell you what they may be," Mr. Prins said.

Among the gunman's victims in the one-hour rampage Sunday was a three-year-old girl, her six-year-old sister and their mother. The six-year-old was hiding behind a tree when shot, police said.

Police said all the known victims of the shooting rampage had been found. Five of the 19 wounded have been discharged from hospital, four remain in serious but stable condition, and the others are expected to be discharged over the next



An undated file photo of Martin Bryant, the 28-year-old man who was arrested following the massacre of 35 people at the Port Arthur historic site in the southern Australian island state of Tasmania (Reuter photo)

few days. Mr. Bryant was being treated in the same hospital as the wounded for his burns, and hospital staff said he would receive both medical and psychological assessment.

"We do not know how long this person will be in hospital," said Lindsay Pyne, chief executive officer at hospital.

Mr. Pyne said hospital staff were under stress, having to treat a man charged in relation to the massacre and the victims.

"Virtually all of the people in Tasmania may have seen a photo of the person who committed the crime,"

Mr. Prins said.

Mr. Bryant's photograph was published in newspapers across Australia and elsewhere Tuesday, before he was charged.

The publication of the photo prompted Tasmania's top prosecutor to warn the media about its coverage of the massacre.

Neighbours have described Mr. Bryant as an introverted man, who inherited wealth from an elderly female companion and loved animals.

"He was withdrawn and quiet and very strange," said Scott Goldsmith, who lived opposite Mr. Bryant in Hobart.

Australia is a nation in mourning following the massacre, with all Australian flags on government buildings to be flown at half mast Wednesday, and various church services being staged around the country.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard will attend a service Wednesday and may visit the wounded in hospital. Tasmania's parliament has been adjourned for a week as a mark of respect.

Tasmania's Anglican Archbishop Phillip Newell called for a one-minute national silence Wednesday as a mark of respect. "That would make a great national recognition of this tragedy," Arch. Newell said.

Shooting in Liberian capital after mansion attack

MONROVIA (R) — Rival factions exchanged gunfire in the east of the Liberian capital Tuesday after the head of state and the leader of the country's biggest militia fled the presidential offices under a hail of bullets.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs George Moose and Ghana's Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammed Idr Chams were due in Monrovia to continue mediation efforts.

Wilton Sankawulo, chairman of the Council of State, and Vice-Chairman Charles Taylor, fled the executive mansion Monday under a hail of gunfire.

Mr. Taylor's forces opened fire as ethnic Krahn fighters advanced up the hill to the mansion from the main army barracks. The Krahn said they took the presence of scores of Taylor's gunmen at the mansion as a provocation and the fighting spread to the Sinkor district beyond the mansion.

Mr. Taylor had sworn the Council of State would return to work Monday as a confidence-boosting gesture, though the area around the barracks, where Krahn gunmen are holed up, has remained tense despite the 10-day-old ceasefire.

Fighting broke out on April 6 after the council tried to arrest Krahn warlord Roosevelt Johnson on murder charges.

A Ghanaian-mediated truce on April 19 allowed West African peacekeeping troops to deploy around the city centre but parts of the eastern suburbs remain no-go areas.

At least one Krahn fighter was killed and a West African peacekeeper from the ECOMOG force was wounded. "The buffer zone between them was too small," said Monie Captan, minister of state for presidential affairs, who was also in the mansion.

"They're all factions, right?" said William Massaquoi, a second lieutenant in the mainly-Krahn Armed Forces of Liberia militia. "I don't see why one faction should be allowed to enter the ground and not the others."

Fighting raged between Krahn militias and Mr. Taylor's forces in the Sinkor district beyond the mansion, and the Lebanese charge d'affaires who had remained in the embassy through two weeks of fighting was evacuated.

Basque deal boosts Aznar for government vote

MADRID (R) — A late agreement with moderate Basque nationalists has guaranteed Spanish conservative leader Jose Maria Aznar a bigger majority for his investiture as prime minister next Saturday after 13 years of Socialist rule.

The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) agreed late Monday to throw its five votes behind Mr. Aznar in what could become a longer-term alliance with his centre-right Popular Party (PP).

The pact was mostly symbolic since the Basques would prove of little help to Mr. Aznar if he were to fall out with Catalan nationalists who hold the balance of power.

The Catalans decided Sunday after eight weeks of negotiation to back Mr. Aznar for prime minister and said they hoped the pact would stand for the full four years of the legislature.

But Catalan regional President Jordi Pujol has already said he cannot guarantee that his coalition will not pull out if the PP fails to keep satisfying its demands.

The PP had to turn for backing to the Catalan Convergence and Unity (CIU) coalition and smaller regional parties because the March 3 general election left it 20 seats short of an absolute majority in the 350-seat parliament.

The Socialists, in power since 1982, blamed their narrow defeat in part on

charges that they had engineered a "dirty war" against Basque ETA separatist rebels which killed 27 people between 1983 and 1987.

Their first interior minister was indicted in January on three counts for masterminding and running death squads, but Tuesday a Supreme Court writ cleared outgoing Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez and two other top Socialists of all accusations that they had backed the covert campaign.

Following the agreement with the Basque moderates, Mr. Aznar is now expected to obtain 181 votes Saturday at the end of the two-day investiture debate — the PP's 156 seats, CIU's 16, four from the Canary Islands Coalition and the PNV's five.

The Basques' vote, although technically superfluous, gives the PP a comfortable margin over Mr. Gonzalez's Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the Communist-led United Left (IU) coalition who are expected to vote against.

Aznar is expected to take an oath of office before King Juan Carlos Sunday and form a government by Monday.

The pillars of the deal with the PNV are agreement on economic principles and job-training and the return of the region's so-called historic heritage — property and funds confiscated during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

The secretary-general of the Basque branch of the Socialist Party, Ramon Jauregui, said he was concerned that the PP was buying the support of Basques and Catalans in exchange for purely material compensation.

"The accords could mean that...big differences and political injustices emerge (between regions), which is always dangerous, or that the state deficit shoots up and we don't fulfil the Maastricht (EU single-currency) criteria," Mr. Jauregui said.

The Socialists have already denounced the PP's pact with CIU as favouring the wealthy northeastern region and jeopardising efforts to trim Spain's budget deficit.

The Basque country is to have greater control over some types of tax revenues such as special taxes on alcohol, tobacco and fossil fuels, while income tax and non-residents' tax are also under review.

All semi-autonomous regions are to obtain control over 30 per cent of income tax revenues instead of 15 per cent at present, and have a greater say in setting and managing taxes.

The PP has also agreed to a host of Catalan requests including greater control over traffic police and management of ports and more autonomy in managing job placements and training.

India holds fresh balloting in 447 poll booths

NEW DELHI (agencies) — India began a fresh round of voting Tuesday at more than 400 polling stations where weekend violence marred earlier ballots in a huge election exercise in the world's largest democracy.

Voting began in 447 polling booths in 44 of the constituencies which voted Saturday, the first day of six-phase elections all major opinion polls say will end in a coalition government when a clear picture emerges by May 11.

On Saturday, voting was held for 150 of parliament's 543 seats being contested, with a total of some 200,000 polling booths in use.

The start of the election was generally peaceful, if dull. Strict enforcement of campaign spending and practice rules by the hawkish Election Commission severely restricted the colourful campaigning and largesse that have marked Indian elections in the past.

In the last poll in 1991, about 300 people were killed in election violence. This time, reports of violence, intimidation and attempts at rigging the polls have been far fewer.

Up to 1.75 million policemen have been drafted in to guard the polls, which end in the rebellious northern state of Jammu and Kashmir on May 30. The elections are phased to allow security forces to be moved around the sprawling country with 590 million voters.

The election pits Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's

ailing Congress Party against a fierce challenge from the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a loose leftist alliance, the National Front-Left Front (NF-LF).

All major opinion polls predict the BJP, a fringe party with only two seats in 1984, will emerge as the biggest party for the first time.

But it is considered unlikely to be able to find enough allies to form a government and the most popular forecast is for a Congress NF-LF coalition.

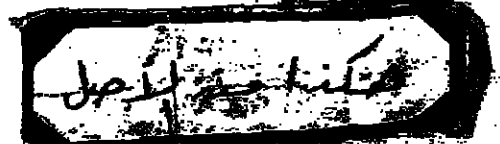
The Janata Dal, a major component of the leftist alliance, said Tuesday it would consider a coalition with Congress if Mr. Rao stepped down.

Most of Tuesday's balloting was in the troubled northeastern state of Assam and in Andhra Pradesh. Mr. Rao's southern home base.

Voting in his Andhra Pradesh constituency of Nandyal was disrupted Saturday by political activists who poured water and ink into ballot boxes, and by two bomb blasts. No one was hurt by the crude bombs.

The Federal Election Commission ordered fresh voting in one Assam constituency after it found the name of an independent candidate had not been printed on the ballot paper.

An estimated 450,000 people were eligible to vote in Tuesday's voting.



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An alarming applaud

IT IS U.S. President Bill Clinton's right to help Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres win the upcoming Israeli elections. But it is the responsibility of the White House chief as president of the country that is sponsoring the Arab-Israeli peace talks to show sensitivity to the feelings of all parties involved in the process and respect for the agreements which the United States helped reach among them. That is a responsibility to which Mr. Clinton seems to be giving little attention as he works to ensure that Mr. Peres remains at the helm of Israeli politics after the May 29 elections.

There was nothing surprising about Mr. Clinton's assertion in front of a Jewish lobby group of the U.S. unshakable support for the Jewish state. After all, he is the U.S. president whom an Israeli newspaper dubbed as "the yes man who agreed to ... Peres' every request."

"It is unlikely that an American president (other than Mr. Clinton) would have defended Israeli shelling of a neighbouring state which led to so many deaths," wrote the Israeli paper Yediot Aharonot. Not quite. Many an American president defended Israeli acts which were condemned by the majority of the international community and many an American president provided unequivocal support for the Jewish state at times when such stands simply defied logic. The only difference is that Mr. Clinton has gone beyond what any of his predecessors did in his blind support for Israel.

The U.S. speaks of itself as a credible sponsor of the peace talks. But its actions belie its words. It was in the White House that Israel and the Palestinians signed the agreement which pledged that the future of occupied Jerusalem would be decided in the final status negotiations, that have yet to start. Mr. Clinton was witness to that agreement. But this legal and ethical U.S. obligation to the deal seems to be taken lightly, very lightly, by Mr. Clinton. His concern with pleasing Israel seems to be much stronger than his concern for U.S. obligations and the success of the peace process. This is the only explanation for Mr. Clinton's applaud when Mr. Peres announced this week that occupied Jerusalem will "remain the undivided capital" of Israel, in violation of Israel's commitment to the Palestinians in the Oslo deal which was signed in Washington.

A White House official rushed to explain that Mr. Clinton's behaviour came out of politeness, saying that the U.S. still believes that the future of Jerusalem should be decided in the final status negotiations. Not enough. Mr. Clinton's behaviour has serious implications. People in high offices usually calculate their moves. The president of the U.S. certainly does that. If it is true that his clapping for Peres' determination to violate the Oslo deal was a blunder and does not represent official U.S. policy, Mr. Clinton himself has to make that clear — that is, of course, if he really cares about the U.S. credibility and how the Arabs see him and his country.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE LATEST Israeli aggression has proved that Iran wields enough real power in Lebanon through the Hizbollah resistance group and through the facilities provided by Syria to enable Tehran to perpetuate its influence in the region, said Mahmoud Rimawi, a writer for Al Ra'i. Indeed, Tehran was jubilant over the outcome of the Israeli aggression since the ceasefire agreement allowed its Hizbollah allies to retain the right to wage war on Israeli military targets, said the writer. On the diplomatic front, both the United States and France, which proposed ideas for the ceasefire, involved Iran in the negotiations, considering Tehran as a partner on equal footing with Damascus and Beirut. He said Iran's presence in Lebanon is not restricted to being Hizbollah launch attacks on Israel, but is also felt through the social, cultural, informational and other activities which this group exercises in southern Lebanon with direct help from Tehran and indirect and tacit approval from Damascus, said the writer. He said that despite the wide destruction inflicted on the Shiite-dominated region of south Lebanon, the Shiites of Lebanon and Iran have proved, through their steadfastness, that they are a power to reckon with at both the diplomatic and military levels.

A WRITER for Al Dustour decried the stand of the Arab League during the Lebanese crisis, noting that while the Arab League proved to be impotent in the face of Israel's aggression, the Arab leaders tend to show "bravery of lions" vis-a-vis Iraq. Taher Adwan said that, for its part, Jordan should reconsider its relations with Israel in view of the massacre it committed in Lebanon and in light of the Jewish state's rejection of Jordan's call for a halt of the aggression. Israel is not worthy of peace and its people are the real source of evil and the tragedies that have befallen the Arab countries since the creation of the Jewish state, charged the writer. If the Arabs are incapable of doing anything to stop Israel's regular acts of aggression on Lebanon, the Palestinians and other Arab states, due to lack of unity among them, they at least should refrain from condemning any resistance or violent act against the Israelis, he demanded. The writer said the Arabs should remember that it is Israel which is the mastermind of all kinds of terrorism, and that it has been responsible for the massacre of Arab civilians in Lebanon.

The Washington Watch

Israeli actions — scars people will live with for ever

By Dr. James Zogby

FOR EVERY action there is a reaction; this is a fundamental law of physics, as well as of politics and human behaviour. It is also a lesson that Israel has never learned.

More accurately, it is a lesson that Israel has been shielded from learning. In part due to its overwhelming military strength, coupled with the political backing it receives from the U.S., Israel operates in the Middle East as if its actions had no consequences and will produce no reactions. As a result, Israel treats any response to its own actions as unjustified.

So it is that 40,000 bombs after the aggression started, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres agreed to a ceasefire in Lebanon and Israel's supporters now want to move on and act as if nothing had happened.

But for the families of the more than 200 Lebanese killed, the 450,000 refugees and the tens of thousands whose homes and villages were destroyed in the Israeli assault, moving on and forgetting will not be easy.

The peace process was distorted from the beginning by the asymmetry of power that exists between Israel and its weaker negotiating partners. This was matched by an asymmetry of pressure and compassion. Pressure was placed only on the weaker Arabs, and compassion was shown only to the suffering of the Israelis.

As the peace process has moved forward since the 1993 signing of the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles, these asymmetries of power have served only to deform the shape of peace itself. It was, in the Israeli mind, a peace for Israel. Israel set the terms and Palestinians were left not to negotiate but to whittle away at Israel's conditions. Israel and its supporters in the U.S. Congress defined Palestinian compliance with the agreement — and the Palestinians were forced to comply, while the Israelis continue to build settlements, expropriate land, block Palestinian commerce and fail to implement even the most basic terms of the agreements.

The results: Gaza is poorer today than on the day when the peace accords were signed. The West Bank and Gaza are, today, subject to economic strangulation at the hands of an Israel that is only technically no longer an occupier.

Only last week, the Palestinians met one of the Israeli-U.S. Congress-imposed conditions when the Palestine National Council (PNC) fulfilled its commitment to revoke those articles in the PLO Charter that are not in compliance with their agreement with the Israelis. This was a brave and correct move, by any measure. But, given what the Palestinians are currently enduring, it is a move

that will undoubtedly enrage opponents of this strange and distorted peace.

Mr. Peres celebrated the PNC vote and declared victory. Having behaved more like a hawk than a dove in recent months, Mr. Peres may now win the election at the end of May — but what will that bring? A Labour victory, a wounded and enraged Palestinian and Lebanese people and an Israeli public still operating under the old rules that there are no consequences to their behaviour — that they can get the Arabs to do whatever they want without concern for any reaction.

U.S. government spokespeople will laud the accomplishments of the past week, the PLO Charter changes, the ceasefire in Lebanon. Israelis will celebrate. And the press will mimic the words given to them. To hear that story as they play it out, it is as if Israel were threatened by Lebanon and there were a symmetrical balance of terror.

In simple mathematics, 500 Katyusha rockets do not equal 40,000 bombs; nor do 200 dead and 1,000 wounded equal 50 wounded; just as 450,000 refugees do not equal 10,000 — unless one uses the Israeli calculus in which they are the only ones who suffer and they are the only ones who live in fear.

The ceasefire agreement itself is an outrage. It is essentially a restatement on paper of the unofficial 1993 understanding that governed conflict in the south of Lebanon until Israel decided two weeks ago to attempt to impose new rules. In that sense it is an agreement that could have been reached two weeks ago; it is in essence the very agreement that Israel broke on March 30 when an Israeli army tank killed two civilians and unleashed the spiral of events that resulted in the brutal assault begun on April 11.

And so there is the tragedy that 40,000 bombs and many lives lost later Israel and Lebanon are back to square one (which — for the record — includes Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory). Is this a cause for celebration?

What the Israelis and their supporters never calculate is the effect of their actions. Arabs are not senseless stones to be pushed around or crushed at will — they, too bleed and feel outrage. They also act.

Thirty years, after a series of urban riots that shook most major American cities, the U.S. government convened a commission to study the root causes of this violence. At the end of their study the commission concluded that the massive urban unrest was the result of systemic racism, poverty and injustice.

The Middle East is no different in this respect. How long

can Gazans remain quiet with no access or egress, with 70 per cent unemployment and shortage of food? How long can West Bank residents remain calm with no access to land, with widespread unemployment and severely limited freedom? How will Lebanon return to normalcy with so many lost, with so much destruction to remind them of the past two weeks and even further back?

It should not require an extensive study or a PhD to realise that out of the destruction of Lebanon were born some new "extremists" and some more "terrorists," or that the moderate Palestinian leadership that made peace will now come under increasing threat from those spurred by resentment and despair.

The growth of "extremism" in the Middle East in recent years is, in part, a function of this pent-up anger. And, in part, the way to confront extremism is to react with justice towards those who are vulnerable.

Never wanting to assume responsibility for the consequences of its actions, however, Israel insists that its behaviour in no way contributes to "extremism." The Israelis instead prefer to point a finger at others. In fact, other countries with an ideological bent do contribute to "extremism," but they would find little fertile ground if not for the suffering, resentment and injustice that defines daily life in areas affected by Israeli behaviour.

All of this imposes fateful choices on the Israeli government at this juncture. Those Arabs who continue to hang by a thread to the peace process, who continue to believe that there is no way to end the conflict except through a negotiated settlement, who were so exhilarated by the September 1993 signing of the Declaration of Principles and who therefore were so enraged by the closure and new settlement construction and the devastation of Lebanon have a simple message to offer the Israeli government:

Peace is not yours alone. When you overreach and overreact, your behaviour has consequences. When you fail to consider the humanity of the Arabs and the suffering you impose on Arabs, you make it increasingly difficult for peace to emerge.

The wounds created in the past two months in the West Bank and Gaza, and in the past two weeks in Lebanon, will take a long time to heal — because these are old wounds reopened, and not for the first time. When a scab is pulled off an old wound it not only bleeds anew but it leaves a new scar. And these are scars people will live with for ever.

Israel's double standard — moral high ground in a swamp

By Gwynne Dyer

There, now, everything is back on track. A ceasefire has stopped both the Israeli shelling and air attacks in southern Lebanon and the Hizbollah rocket attacks on northern Israel. And even as the last explosions echoed across Lebanon, Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat got a 10-to-one majority in the Palestine National Council to repeal the clauses in the PLO charter denying Israel's right to exist.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres immediately responded by changing his Labour Party's policy statement so that it no longer opposes the creation of a Palestinian state. Even the Golan Heights may be returned to Syria as part of a final peace settlement. And the latest opinion poll in Israel shows Peres in the lead 53 per cent to 47 per cent for the opposition Likud block's Netanyahu, in the campaign for the election on May 29.

So the Middle East peace process, looks promising again. But the events of the past two months raise a broader question: Can there be a lasting Middle East peace if Israel does not accept its share of the blame? Because the double standards applied to the killing of civilians by all — all Israelis are deeply offensive to the other inhabitants of the region. Consider the past two months.

February, 1996 was the worst month for terrorism in Israel for sixty years. The worst, in fact, since July, 1936, when over 100 people were killed in terrorist attacks culminating with a bomb in the Melon Market in Haifa that slaughtered 53 people. And the 1996 terrorist bombs triggered a wave of violence in the region.

In March, Jerusalem broke off peace talks with Syria after President Hafez Assad's regime praised the handwork of the Palestinian suicide-bombers. Assad then retaliated by letting the Hizbollah guerrillas in Lebanon restart their rocket attacks on northern Israel, suspended since the 1993 ceasefire.

Not much by way of moral concern here. Both the Palestinian suicide bombers and the Lebanese Hizbollah guerrillas at least have the virtue (if it is one) of being sincerely committed to their cause, but President Assad plays a tough game of realpolitik and regards sincerity as a handy negotiating tactic.

The Hizbollah guerrillas he turned loose fired over 600 Katyusha rockets at northern Israel in two weeks, causing much damage (though no fatalities). With the Israeli government in the midst of a close election campaign, it was bound to respond by force. As always, however, it could choose from a range of responses — and it deliberately went to extremes.

For sixteen days, Israel's armed forces hammered southern Lebanon, and even ranged as far north as Beirut. Israeli shells and bombs killed over 150 Lebanese, the vast majority of whom were innocent civilians, and half a million Lebanese abandoned their homes and fled north to get away from the Israeli attacks.

It worked brilliantly, producing a crisis that brought the diplomats of most of the great powers rushing to the scene. The ceasefire brokered by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher (with significant French and even some Russian input) gives Israel much better guarantees than before of peace on its northern frontier.

But Hafez Al Assad, the oldest fox in the woods, wins too. The Israeli Labour Party was expected to end its opposition to a Palestinian state once the PLO mended its charter, but nobody foresaw it reversing its position on the Golan Heights, too. That is Assad's pay-off — and Peres may be secretly grateful to Assad for creating the crisis in which Labour could safely make the policy shift.

In pragmatic terms, it all worked out quite well in the end. In moral terms, however, it is a disaster. And a peace built on these foundations is bound to be very shaky indeed.

Peres is not in any way worse, more cynical, more

double standard and accepts that killing innocent civilians is wrong even when Israelis do it; whether they do it with heavy artillery or with stolen assault rifles.

The Israeli army regularly blows up the houses of Palestinians who carry out terrorist attacks. It could make a start by treating all terrorists the same by blowing up the house of Baruch Goldstein, the man who massacred the Palestinians in the Hebron mosque last year.

Indeed, every Israeli should be reminded regularly that terrorism is not a Palestinian monopoly. Remember that bad month in 1936? The victims were all Palestinians. And the bombers were a dissident faction of Zionists known as the Revisionists.

Moral high ground? Not in this swamp.

LETTERS

Of trust and painful truths

To the Editor:

AS A LONE Britisher, Welsh by birth, I salute your bravery in devoting your editorial and most of the full page of the April 20 newspaper to denouncing the intentions of Israel, in the several treaties signed during last year.

In the 1930s I trained Arabs at Sarafand in Palestine for service in the Palestine Regiment which, together with the Israelis, were intended to police the country at the end of the British protectorate. Having, at one time, ran foul of the Zionist Agency, and being reigned in as politically expedient, I have had first-hand experience of the way the Israelis operate, financed by the American dollar.

What is happening now, in what was the fair country of Lebanon which contained many, now departed friends of mine, is nothing else but rampant terrorism by one nation against another and must be condemned by all peace-loving countries, regardless of colour, creed or nationality.

This was the aim of World War II. When the Jewish state was granted sanctuary in Palestine. The Arab Nation has accepted this in full faith and the Jews should do likewise. But no! Israel sees Palestine as the "promised land" and the Israelis as God's chosen people, capable to do no wrong! This is no way in which to go into the process of making agreements with neighbouring countries and it needs to be thoroughly understood by other participants in the agreement.

They need to obtain a guarantor to the document, with the power of overseeing its maintenance in full faith; and should there be a failure in any article of that agreement, the guarantor should be able to bring either side to a court set up by the United Nations.

In one corner of the page where your editorial appears there is a letter from an American speaking about the honesty of an Arab taxi driver in Amman which "has done more to promote tourism in Jordan than any poster or advertisement could have accomplished." Let other nations know, you can trust life, limb and money with an Arab, but neither of them with an Israeli. This is the lesson being so painfully learned.

Paul Saint,
48 Prince Mohammad Street,
P.O. Box: 1370,
Aqaba.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.



Russia signs historic \$40 billion debt deal

PARIS (R) — Russia has signed a major debt agreement with rich creditor nations designed to lift the burden of repaying the huge debts it inherited from the former Soviet Union and help it push through tough economic reforms.

The Paris Club said it had agreed to reschedule \$40 billion in debt over 25 years. This includes a grace period of six years in which Russia will not have to make repayments of principal.

"This agreement is in size the largest of all agreements previously negotiated by the Paris Club creditor countries in its 40 years history," it said in a statement.

"It is a historic agreement," Paris Club Chairman Christian Noyer said in an interview with Reuters Television.

"We have designed something that we believe is necessary for Russia to implement the reforms and establish sound macro-economic policies," he added.

The Paris Club deal follows an agreement with the International Monetary Fund earlier this year on a three-year \$10 billion loan to underpin Russia's economic reforms.

Rich nations have been keen to support President Boris Yeltsin, trailing in opinion polls his communist rival Gennady Zyuganov ahead of presidential elections in June, in pushing through the reforms.

Mr. Noyer said the agreement depended on Russia sticking to the reform programme agreed with the IMF.

"One thing is clear, that this is based on the reforms that have been decided by the Russian government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This agreement relies on the reforms continuing," he added.

"If the agreement with the IMF collapses, the accord with the creditors collapses," he told a news conference.

Asked, however, about the impact on the Paris Club deal of a communist victory in June, he said the group looked at economic programmes, not at political matters.

The deal allows for a once-and-for-all exit rescheduling, which means Russia will not have to seek further debt relief.

"I do believe this agreement will be fulfilled and we will not be having any more discussions about Russian debt," Mr. Noyer said.

In granting Russia 25 years to repay its debt, Paris Club creditors seem to have given it most of what it was seeking at the talks, which lasted from Thursday to early Monday morning.

Creditor sources said before the talks that they questioned whether Russia would get the full 25 years it was seeking.

But Mr. Noyer said creditor nations were satisfied both because Russia would make interest payments on the debt and because repayments were due to increase as its economy improved.

"I consider that the creditor countries have obtained what was important to them, that is to say, one — normal payment of interest from now — and two — a regular increase in the payments in the future," he said.

He also said the bulk of the repayments would be made within 20 years. "The largest part will be made over 20 years."

Creditor sources had suggested before the talks that the Paris Club could restructure repayments in such a way as to ensure most of them were made within a shorter period while stretching out smaller repayments to as

near to 25 years as possible to allow Moscow to claim a political victory at home.

Mr. Noyer said Russia would have owed \$8 billion to Paris Club creditors this year if no rescheduling accord — long or short-term — had been signed this year. It now owes \$2 billion.

The talks covered only debt owed to the former Soviet Union, estimated to total some \$45 billion, but not new debt run up by Moscow since the Soviet Union disintegrated.

Mr. Noyer also said Monday's accord opened the way for closer co-operation with Russia on debts owed to Moscow. Russia is itself owed billions of dollars by developing countries and is seeking to join the Paris Club as a creditor.

Meanwhile the IMF decided Monday to go ahead with a scheduled \$40 million loan payment to Russia after Moscow acted to put its economic reform programme back on track, monetary sources said.

"The programme is on track," one source, who declined to be identified, said. "Everything basically looks fine."

Coming on top of a \$40 billion debt rescheduling deal between Russia and its Western government creditors, the IMF move is good news for Russian leader Boris Yeltsin in his drive to win another term in a June 16 presidential election.

The \$340 million payment will be made under a \$10.1 billion loan deal struck between Russia and the IMF last month.

Under that pact, the fund has promised to hand over money to Moscow at regular intervals, contingent on Russia sticking to an agreed-on reform programme.

The IMF last month had threatened to hold up disbursement of the loan amid signs that Moscow was backing away from those reforms.

U.N. coffers empty for daily operating expenses

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The United Nations was out of cash Tuesday and will have to borrow from its separate peacekeeping fund meant to repay countries who sent troops on U.N. missions, its chief financial officer said.

The crunch is largely due to the \$1.5 billion owed to the world organisation by the United States. But the shortfall in daily operating monies came earlier than anticipated this year because the \$128 million from Japan and \$50 million from Germany will be paid later than expected.

"Our regular budget cash balance (Tuesday) is zero," said Joseph Connor, an American who is U.N. undersecretary-general for administration and management.

He said he expected to borrow about \$50 million

from peacekeeping, repay it and borrow again, so that by the end of the year the fund would be owed \$200 million.

"We have been stiffing them," he told a news conference in reference to the \$800 million owed to states who contributed troops and equipment to missions around the world. France alone is owed \$200 million.

A total of \$2.8 billion is owed to the United Nations, with Washington owing \$1.5 billion, followed by Russia at \$400 million and the Ukraine at \$50 million.

Mr. Connor greeted as "good news" recent U.S. legislation that earmarked about \$600 million for the United Nations, about half of which has already been received in stopgap congressional resolutions until final agreement was reached on the budget in

Washington last week.

He expected a check for \$256 million from the United States for dues and peacekeeping costs, hopefully in June, although this was not certain.

He also hoped Russia would pay its \$400 million this year.

"Promises are good but cash is better," he said.

The new U.S. payments, however, account only for full funding of Washington's regular dues to the world body for 1995. "These amounts were payable Jan. 31, 1995," Mr. Connor said.

In addition, Mr. Connor, the former chief executive of the Price Waterhouse accounting firm, said U.S. Congress in October might approve further funds and President Bill Clinton's pledge to pay off arrears in five years.

U.S. Ambassador

Madeleine Albright told reporters in Norway last Friday the Clinton administration was "in good shape" in the funding it had sought for this year.

She said she hoped nations would "now stop talking to me about the U.S. bill and talk more about the need to reform the United Nations." Ms. Albright was referring to criticisms from Japan and western Europe, which foot most of the U.N. bill.

But Mr. Connor said the United States would still owe \$1.3 billion at the end of 1996, out of an estimated overall \$2.1 billion U.N. debt by December.

By then, he forecast, daily U.N. operating costs would show a deficit of \$200 million. But, he said, the situation would have been much worse without the

new U.S. funds.

The Republican-dominated Congress has refused to pay the debt, partly out of political animosity toward the U.N., as well as demands it cut spending.

The world body in December passed a no-growth budget of \$2.6 billion over two years for regular operating expenses that will mean 800 jobs cut or left vacant. Peacekeeping in 1996 is forecast at \$1.5 billion.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 1996

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Flighter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You can finish up a project today which has been taking a good deal of your time, however, steer clear of a bigwig who may be critical of your decisions and the actions taken. Tonight be with your loved ones at home.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You should visit your beauty or barber shop today and improve your appearance so that you can feel more sure of yourself and this attitude will be noticed by those in charge, who will help in your success and prosperity.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Don't try to upset a family tie today in any manner and then you can be off to the pleasure you desire with your loved ones. Later tonight, your career activities will be observed by those in authority; so do your best.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Communicating with others today is best if you say or write exactly what is on your mind, for the thoughts expressed by you could be quite beneficial on any new projects which will need a lot brainstorming and careful planning.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be wise in the handling of money and property interests today and safeguard your position in life. Get reports out on time on any new project which needs much attention on your part for you to gain the success you desire.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Being too demanding in trying to gain your aims today would be unwise during the daytime. Later tonight is the time to tend to finances and any obligation which have come up at this time.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Early today handle those unimportant tasks and then be off to something of value you wish to attain. Try not to overspend on any products or services which come about or you could find yourself in a lot of debt.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Dig into the right sources today to get the information you need on some new career activity and you will find success. This can be a romantic evening for you and your mate, so spend as much time as possible together.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you are unwise in any manner today, you could ruffle feathers easily. Use tact in going after personal aims at this time and later this evening spend some quality time with your loved ones if possible.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Use care and caution today in the handling of new enterprises and study them well first. A bigwig can do you a big favour on a new project which will bring your success and prosperity, so take advantage of this at this time.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Be sure to handle promises you have made in the morning today, then look for interesting new outlets and hobbies. Later this evening is a good time to spend with loved ones and close friends whom you have neglected.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Be sure to meet with a fellow associate today and handle those business affairs you had promised to take care of together. Later this evening is the time to handle any pressing obstacles in your life with the help of experts.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

Clinton, worried about prices, orders oil sale from reserve

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton has ordered the Energy Department to start selling about 12 million barrels of oil from its strategic petroleum reserve in an effort to increase supplies and bring down gasoline prices that have jumped in recent weeks.

Mr. Clinton also directed Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary to report to him within 45 days on factors that led to the price rise and to analyse the outlook for the rest of the summer driving season.

"I believe these are the

appropriate steps to take at this time. My administration will continue to monitor developments in this market in the coming weeks," Mr. Clinton said in a statement.

In Miami, Mr. Clinton told a Democratic Party fund raiser: "I've been very concerned about this dramatic, although apparently temporary, rise in the price of gasoline at the pump. It affects the take-home pay of working people who have to commute to work. It offers a great problem for tourism centres like Florida which are about to get into

the high driving season."

The Energy Department said it will sell the oil — worth \$227 million — on May 13, but may hold additional sales to get desirable bids.

"We will offer it for sale on May 13 and the market will nominate and bid on how much it wants at that time," said the department official, who asked not to be named.

He said the sale that could pump 600,000 barrels per day into the market, along with an expected seasonal decline in oil prices, will ease retail gasoline prices but would not estimate by how much.

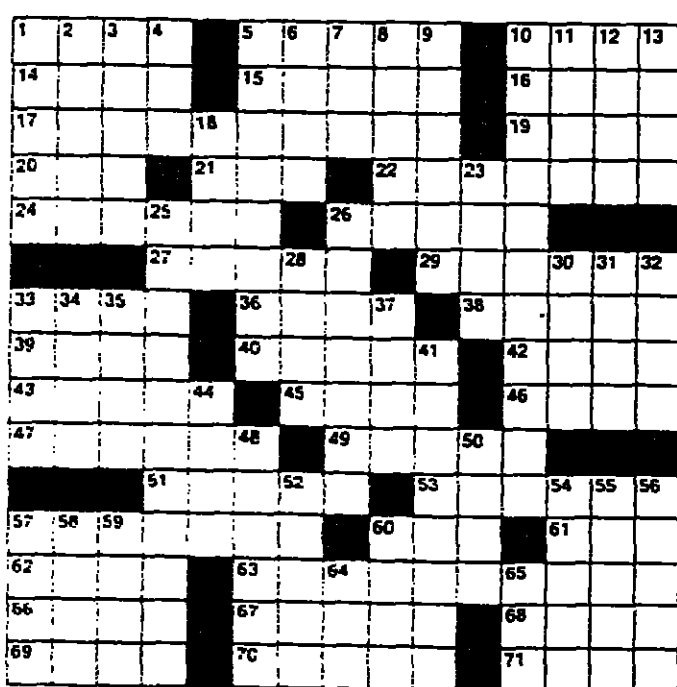
The United States uses about 17 million barrels of oil per day.

Before attending a White House meeting on gasoline prices.

THE Daily Crossword by Norma Steinberg

ACROSS

- 1 Ditto
- 5 Enjoys a book
- 10 Baby buggy
- 14 Sympic
- 15 Kukla's pal
- 16 Flying prefix
- 17 Top-notch
- 19 Hindu music
- 23 A Gaber
- 21 Police blotter into letters
- 22 King Arthur's city
- 24 Vnities
- 26 Bulore candle or numeral
- 27 Slogan
- 29 Bible book
- 33 Contemptible one
- 36 Part of the foot
- 38 Use a razor
- 39 Busy as —
- 40 Leaf-gathering tools
- 42 Border lake
- 43 On hand
- 45 Casual affirmative
- 46 Command to a broker
- 47 Multitude
- 49 Swap
- 51 Assumed name
- 53 Eliminate
- 57 Platter
- 60 Swindle
- 61 — moment's notice
- 62 Deal with
- 63 Important
- 66 — Office
- 67 Dwelling
- 68 Per —
- 69 Not a one
- 70 Made clothing
- 71 Only



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Yesterday's puzzle solved

ACROSS: 1. HOT, 5. PAL, 10. NOSH, 14. MINI, 15. ANIMA, 16. IDEA, 17. ALAN, 18. PITHY, 19. TEAR, 20. HONGKONG, 21. EDWARD, 22. LATE, 23. COIT, 24. RAPINE, 25. CLAPTRAP, 26. ALIEN, 27. SLAYS, 28. ONA, 29. RING, 30. MAINE, 31. CUES, 32. EBO, 33. FAUNS, 34. MONTE, 35. RINGLING, 36. VODOO, 37. OONIA, 38. FALK, 39. JETSET, 40. TRUEBLUE, 41. AXEL, 42. ANIMAL, 43. OUST, 44. MILIO, 45. INLET, 46. ORSO, 47. STEW, 48. NEEDS, 49. KERN

DOWN

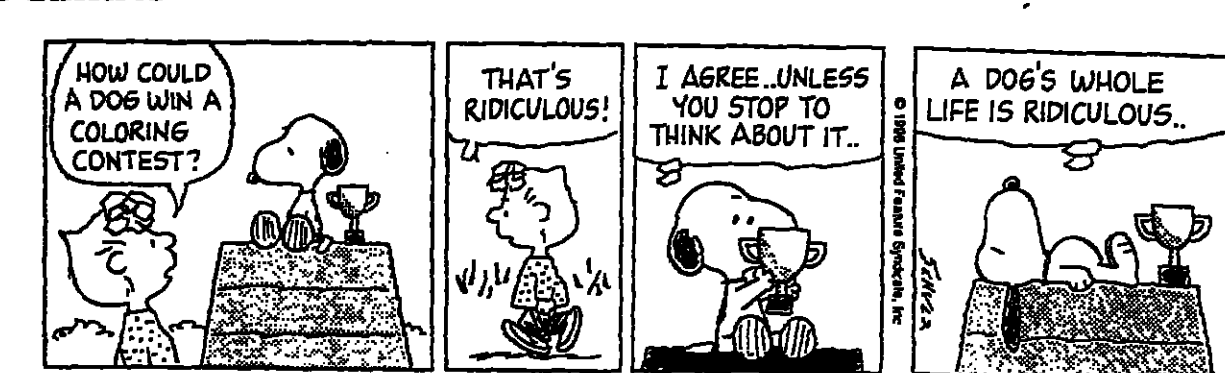
- 1 Newsman
- 2 Morley
- 3 In existence
- 4 Wall painting
- 5 German river
- 6 Mick Jagger, e.g.
- 7 Ms. Fitzgerald

- 52 Pueblo
- 53 component
- 54 Barbecue
- 55 site
- 56 Merman
- 57 "Now I — down to sleep"
- 58 Computer screen picture
- 59 — Scotia
- 60 Practice boxing
- 61 Yield
- 62 Drag behind
- 63 Sis.

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



Japan to promote foreign mergers and acquisitions

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan, economic structure amid a dramatic change in undercurrent including globalisation.

"Mergers and acquisitions will help invigorate the economy, create new jobs and promote its globalisation through transfer of economic resources, and new technology and systems," it said.

The statement said the government would enhance efforts to provide information to foreign firms, while upgrading the environment for mergers and acquisitions through administrative and legal reforms.

The statement came two weeks after Ford Motor Co. of the United States announced it would boost its stake in Mazda Motor Co. to 33.4 per cent and take over the company's presidency, the first time a major Japanese company has been run by a foreigner since World War II.

Asian Development Bank launches fresh appeal for aid fund

MANILA (AFP) — The Asian Development Bank (ADB), pricking the conscience of Asia's wealthy economies, launched fresh appeals Tuesday to restock a dwindling concessional fund, saying the region's economic miracle should not blind it to endemic poverty.

At the opening of the 29th annual meeting of the bank's board of governors, ADB President Mitsuo Sato listed poverty alleviation as a main priority for the Manila-based institution into the next century.

"The improvements in economic performance across much of the region must not blind us to the stark reality of the poorer Asia," an emotional Sato said in his speech.

He reminded some 2,000 senior finance department and central bank officials from the Manila-based bank's 56-member nations attending the three-day conference that "in many Asian countries, poverty indicators are worse than in sub-Saharan Africa."

The bank's soft loan window, the Asian Development Fund (ADF), runs out early next year

because Asia's rich nations and traditional Western donors have withheld new commitments.

Despite public pronouncements supporting ADF in principle, European donors have hedged on their contributions until the United States, which is in arrears, pledges new money for the next replenishment.

But U.S. officials said they could not make any commitments at this point because of budgetary constraints.

Western industrialised nations also demanded that Asia's rich nations — Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan — give more to the ADF to match their status as developed economies.

Klaus Juergen Hedrich of Germany, chairman of the ADB board of directors, called for a payback from Asia's so-called "tiger" economies.

"The economic strength of the new donors is to a considerable degree the result of development aid which they themselves received in the past," he said in a speech. "If former developing

countries provide fairly substantial levels of funding, then this will help the decision-makers in the traditional donor countries to argue even more convincingly ... that successful development aid turns recipients into new donors," he added.

Tan Sri Clifford Herbert, secretary general of Malaysia's finance ministry, told AFP that Kuala Lumpur was seriously considering its first contribution to the ADF. He declined to give an amount.

"We have reached a very high level of development ... so we also want to see how we can help the other countries. It's a social conscience," he said.

Malaysia's gross domestic product grew 9.3 per cent in 1995 and is projected at 8.5 per cent in 1996 and 8.0 per cent in 1997, the ADB said.

Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong together gave a mere 0.79 per cent of total contributions to the \$4.2 billion ADF fund when it was last replenished in 1992. Singapore did not contribute.

South Korea has said that it is willing to increase its contributions to the new fund, called ADF Seven, but has demanded a corresponding increase in its voting rights.

Mu-Tsai Chen, administrative vice minister of Taiwan's ministry of finance, told AFP Tuesday it was also willing to raise its share if its official name in the ADB — Taipei, China — be altered to remove the comma.

He said the comma gave the impression that it was part of mainland China, which considers Taiwan a renegade province.

Mr. Chen said Taiwan was a founding member of the ADB in 1966 and was registered then as the republic of China. But this was changed when China was admitted to the bank in 1985.

Other challenges facing the bank include helping Asia's former communist states shift from command-style economies to the free market, enhancing sub-regional cooperation and raising productivity in middle-income countries. Mr. Sato said.

Suez board agrees to sell French Banque Indosuez

PARIS (R) — French industrial and financial holding company Cie de Suez has agreed to sell control of investment banking arm Banque Indosuez to mutual bank Credit Agricole and hoped to finalise a deal soon.

The announcement came after a lengthy board meeting and was the second big event in the day in the French financial sector, where poor margins and the scars of property market recession have for a long time fuelled expectations of a shake-out.

"The board of Compagnie de Suez, in its meeting of April 29 1996, declared its agreement to sell a majority stake in Banque Indosuez," Suez said in a statement.

"It examined the offer from the Caisse Nationale de Cedit Agricole, approved it in principle and called on the chairman to finalise a deal as soon as possible," the statement said.

It gave no further details. That news followed an early tremor in the sector, when the troubled property lender Credit Foncier revealed losses of 10.8 billion francs (\$2.10 billion) for 1995 and charges of 13.6 billion francs (\$2.64 billion) for exposure to risks in the moribund French property market.

The Indosuez deal came

despite repeated declarations in the past that the bank was not for sale, but after fresh rumours in the market late last week that the highly profitable Credit Agricole grouping was on the verge of clinching the acquisition.

Speculation has been rife for a year or more that Suez could let go of Indosuez, which, like many others in the financial sector has been burned by heavy involvement in property when the bottom fell out of the market at the end of the 1980s.

Indosuez managed to turn in a modest profit in 1995 but only after transferring to parent Suez real estate stakes and related loans which were the cause of massive provisions and plunged the bank into loss in 1994.

Despite turning to a net attributable profit of 187 million francs (\$36.36 million) in 1995 from a loss of 1.089 billion francs (\$211.7 million), the bank's operating profit last year tumbled to 2.134 billion francs (\$414.9 million) from 2.810 billion francs (\$546.3 million).

Indosuez blamed that fall of almost 25 per cent, comprising a near 10 per cent decline in net banking income, on slow financial markets, franc strength versus the dollar and yen, and a

lacklustre European climate.

Suez itself says it is counting on a return to profit this year after revealing another large, if shrinking, annual loss for 1995 earlier this month.

The group highlighted lower contributions from Indosuez and Belgian polyethylene foam maker Recticel and big surges in the profit flows from specialised financial institutions and its 62 per cent-owned Societe Generale de Belgique.

Chairman Gerard Mestrallet took the reins at Suez in August in a shake-out that saw the departure of his predecessor Gerard Worms. Around that time the large commercial bank BNP had been rumoured as a candidate to take over Indosuez.

The buyer is a highly profitable association of local banks owned by their depositors and with close links to the farming and rural communities but no presence abroad.

Both the Indosuez deal and a restructuring package which will be drawn with government backing for Credit Foncier are sure to have implications for France's gloomy banking sector.

Caspian pipeline deal seen as breakthrough

ALMATY (R) — A weekend agreement on restructuring an international consortium to build a pipeline pumping oil from Kazakhstan to world markets has been hailed as a major breakthrough.

The protocol, signed during a visit to Almaty by President Boris Yeltsin, sets terms for bringing in Western and Russian oil companies to finance the project.

Agreement on the Caspian pipeline consortium, grouping Russia, Kazakhstan and Oman with eight oil companies, clears an obstacle dating back to 1992 to building the pipeline from Kazakhstan's Tengiz oilfield to the Black Sea.

"This is a major milestone for this important infrastructure project which will help unlock the petroleum resources of Tengiz and the region," Chevron Overseas President Richard Matzke said.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev described the deal as an "historic economic agreement". He said the pipeline could be completed within two to two-and-a-half years.

Despite the breakthrough, a source familiar with pipeline talks told Reuters the new project — with a price tag of \$1.2 to \$1.5 billion — would

probably be finalised only in the third quarter of 1996.

The Tengiz oilfield, with reserves of between six and nine billion barrels, is being developed under a \$20 billion joint venture with U.S. Chevron Corp., which has a half share.

The U.S. Mobil Corp. will buy 25 per cent of the Tengiz production venture from Kazakhstan in May. Field output is set to peak at 700,000 barrels per day (bpd) by 2010, up from 100,000 bpd now.

Under Saturday's protocol, the original consortium founders — Russia, Kazakhstan and Oman — will have their shares scaled back to a combined 50 per cent. Russia takes 24 per cent, Kazakhstan 19 per cent and Oman seven per cent.

The eight oil companies will take on the remainder and commit themselves to funding the entire cost of the pipeline.

Chevron will own 15 per cent, Russia's Lukoil 12.5 per cent, Mobil and Russia's Rosneft 7.5 per cent each, British Gas and AGIP two per cent each, and Oryx and Kazakh state Munasigaz both get 1.75 per cent.

Russia had reservations in the past about allowing its southern neighbour to pump

crude oil across its territory and compete with its own Siberian production.

"For a long time we didn't agree on redistributing shares in the consortium," Mr. Yeltsin said, stopping in Amay.

Talks on finalising the pipeline deal will continue but Mr. Yeltsin said that, with the signature of Omani Oil Minister Sultan Makbul, "all questions have been solved".

The industry source said there were some questions as to whether the Russian companies in the consortium would be able to meet their financial commitments, but the protocol allowed for members to drop out if they could not pay.

"They'll be tested in their capacity and willingness to pay to become participants and earn their shares," the source said.

The 1,500-kilometre pipeline, to be operated by Russia's Transneft, would be sufficient to carry all Kazakh oil exports up to the year 2015, Russian officials said. But with Lukoil and Rosneft on board, it may also carry some Russian crude.

The protocol delays making a major financial commitment until after Russia's June election.

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Irbid District Electricity Company begins to distribute dividends after covering losses of previous years

★ ★ GROSS REVENUES of the Irbid District Electricity Company (IDEC) last year amounted to JD 23.56 million while expenditures totalled JD 21.96 million before taking bank interest into consideration. However, the company closed its 1995 books by posting a net profit of JD 540,103, slightly higher than the JD 526,000 achieved in 1994. Mohammad Arafah, the general manager of the Jordan Electricity Authority and the company's chairman of the board, told the general assembly that the IDEC was able to 1994 to complete covering nearly JD 1 million of losses from previous years and to begin building profit in 1995. The losses were due to the burden of debt, the foreign exchange differentials resulting from the change in the exchange rate of the dinar and the insufficiency of electricity charges. He said that higher efficiency by the company's personnel and the upgrading of the efficiency of the technical network also reflected positively on the return from power sales and helped in covering the losses and achieving profitability.

Mr. Arafah pointed out that higher sales were due to an increase in the number of subscribers in the area of concession from 146,497 subscribers in 1994 to 153,7453 subscribers in 1995. The increase brings the rate of those receiving the IDEC service to 99.5 per cent, Mr. Arafah said.

According to the annual report, the company generated 12 million KWH during 1995 compared to 11 million KWH in 1994. The value of electricity purchased amounted to JD 12.90 million whereas it was sold for JD 18.97 million. The company's fixed assets at the end of last year totalled JD 33.4 million (JD 31 million in 1994) whereas total assets stood at JD 74 million (JD 71 million in 1994). Net shareholders' equity was JD 4.26 million.

Winding up the general assembly meeting, the shareholders approved the board's recommendation to distribute JD 300,000 in dividends at a rate of 10 per cent (Al Dustour + Al Aswaq + Al Ra'i).

National Chlorine Industries Company plans expansion after finding high demand for its products

★ ★ HIGH DEMAND for the chemicals produced by the National Chlorine Industries Company (NCIC) has encouraged the management of the company to begin studying various means to expand production capacity. According to Mohammad Yousef Al Taher, chairman of the board, 90 per cent of NCIC's production for 1996 has been sold already. Mr. Taher pointed out that the expansion was also necessitated by the requirement of the present market and to secure a share for chlorine consumption by the Jordanian bromine factories that are to be set up at Ghor Al Safi. Mr. Taher said that the company's products cover almost all the needs of the local market in addition to some exports to Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. The NCIC, which officially started operation in November 1995, has won a tender from the water Authority to supply 1,000 tonnes of chlorine. It has also won a Syrian tender to supply 3,000 tonnes of hydrochloric acid to Banyas refinery. The company, which also produces caustic soda, had a JD 12.5 million balance sheet total at the end of 1995 (Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

Financial Markets in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

Previous Metals			Date: 25/4/1996		
Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	390.25	8.00	Silver	5.30	0.100

* 25 Kari

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0711	1.0765
Deutsche Mark	0.4644	0.4687
Swiss Franc	0.5735	0.5764
French Franc	0.1375	0.1382
Japanese Yen*	0.00654	0.00667
Dutch Guilder	0.4149	0.4170
Swedish Krona	0.0455	0.0457
Italian Lira*	0.0455	0.0457
Belgian Franc	0.0455	0.0457

* Per 100

Other Currencies

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8780
Lebanese Lira*	0.044425	0.044965
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1895
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2100
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma*	0.2815	0.3085
Cypriot Pound	1.4725	1.5865

* Per 100

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Tuesday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3606/16	Canadian dollar
	1.5318/28	Deutschemarks
	1.7142/52	Dutch guilders
	1.436/46	Swiss francs
	31.46/50	Belgian francs
	5.1738/78	French francs
	1564.1/5.6	Italian lire
	104.70/80	Japanese yen
	6.7790/90	Swedish crowns
	6.5780/30	Norwegian crowns
	5.9057/07	Danish crowns
	1.4050/60	Singapore dollars
	0.7869/74	Australian dollars
	7.7345/55	Hong Kong dollars

One sterling	\$1.5025/35
Gold (ounce)	\$391.20/391.70

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Next European champions' league begins to take shape

LONDON (R) — Next season's champions' league began to take shape at the weekend with domestic title triumphs to last year's European Cup finalists Ajax Amsterdam and AC Milan.

Ajax, vying to join Milan with five European Cup wins when they meet Juventus in next month's final, clinched their third successive Dutch title on Sunday while AC Milan won their fourth Italian title in five years.

Glasgow Rangers are also in the champions' league again, along with Porto who made sure of their berth weeks ago, while Manchester United moved closer towards a quick return with a 5-0 demolition of Nottingham Forest.

The bigger picture was muddled by the troubled form of Bayern Munich, Atletico Madrid and Paris St Germain, who have all but handed the French title to Auxerre.

Atletico have found it as difficult to win at home as they find it easy to clock up victories away.

Radomir Antic's side, without a win at home since Feb. 25, lost there again on Saturday, 3-2 to Valencia, one of several opportunities they have squandered to kill off the Spanish league.

The previous weekend they won 3-1 at Barcelona, their closest challengers, whose victory at Sporting Gijon on Sunday left them only three points adrift with four games to go.

"On Saturday we could have given the league the death sentence," said Atletico owner Jesus Gil.

Barcelona coach Johan Cruyff added: "The league's very open, if we continue to win games then we'll take the league."

Bayern President Franz Beckenbauer, who sacked coach Ottore Hagi after Saturday's 1-0 home defeat by Hansa Rostock, said on Monday five board members and four players, including club captain Lothar Matthaus and Juergen Klinsmann, had begged him to take charge again.

"Nine men were pressing me. They were scared we would lose everything just before the finishing line — the championship and the UEFA Cup," he wrote in the mass circulation daily Bild.

"I told them I can't give any guarantees either. That they'll only find magicians in the circus. That there are six matches in three weeks and no time to make changes."

"I can only try to release the mental blocks in the team."

Dortmund trainer Ottmar Hitzfeld said Bayern's troubles would not necessarily make it easier for his side to retain their title. "Franz is going to give Bayern a new rush of motivation," he said.

Paris St Germain's normally suave president Michel Denisot was furious after his side's shock 1-0 home defeat to Lille virtual-

ly put them out of the title race.

Denisot accused his players of letting both himself and Paris fans down and said they could only redeem themselves by winning the cup winners' cup next week.

"I need about three lorry loads of bicarbonate of soda to swallow this result," he said. "I have given everything to this team but they've gone and spoiled it all. Mistakes have been piling up and I won't forget it."

"In the 10 days till we play Rapid Vienna in Brussels, I'm putting everyone under close watch. I will be at the training camp and I'm going to be very demanding."

PSG's defeat left Auxerre with every hope of winning their first championship and the league and cup double as well.

Milan have reached the European Cup final five times since 1989, winning the trophy that year and again in 1990 and 1994.

Juventus coach Marcello Lippi said: "Right from the beginning, I got the impression that they badly wanted to win this title so that they could get back into the champions cup."

Milan's Fabio Capello said: "This was the thing I wanted most, the title I cared most about, it was a personal matter."

"Overall, this was the most difficult of all my (four) titles. We were up against everybody, there wasn't just one rival but lots

Milan parade new Dutch stars

MILAN (AFP) — AC Milan unveiled their two new Dutch stars on Tuesday, Michael Reiziger and Edgar Davids, who guided Ajax Amsterdam to victory over their new club in last season's European Cup final.

Both internationals, midfielder Davids, 23, and defender Reiziger, who turns 23 on Friday, have signed four-year contracts taking them to June 2000.

Milan Vice-President Adrian Galliani explained: "At the end of this season, we will be losing two great players, Mauro Tassotti and Roberto Donadoni."

Tassotti, who is ending an 18-year playing career with the club, will take on a training/coaching role, while Donadoni, after 10 seasons here, is heading for the fledgling Major League Soccer in the United States.

Galliani said: "We're looking to Reiziger to take over from Tassotti, and Davids from Donadoni, in the same way that we looked to George Weah to fill the gap left by Marco Van Basten."

"And we hope and believe they will have the same success as George Weah."

Reiziger, who made his Ajax debut at the age of 17 in April 1991, said: "This is a great team, with a great future. When you leave Holland, this is the best club to go to."

But he was also braced for the battle for a regular first team slot.

"When you've got 20 or 24 good players, you know the competition is going to be tough," he said. "But I'm used to handling pressure."

As for Friday, he quipped: "This is a big present for me."

Both men were well aware of the three legendary Dutchmen who preceded them in the red and black colours — Ruud Gullit, Frank Rijkaard and Marco Van Basten.

Davids, finishing his fifth season with the Dutch giants, said: "I know what to expect. I'm not worried about the comparisons that are going to be made."

— Juventus, Fiorentina, Lazio, Parma.

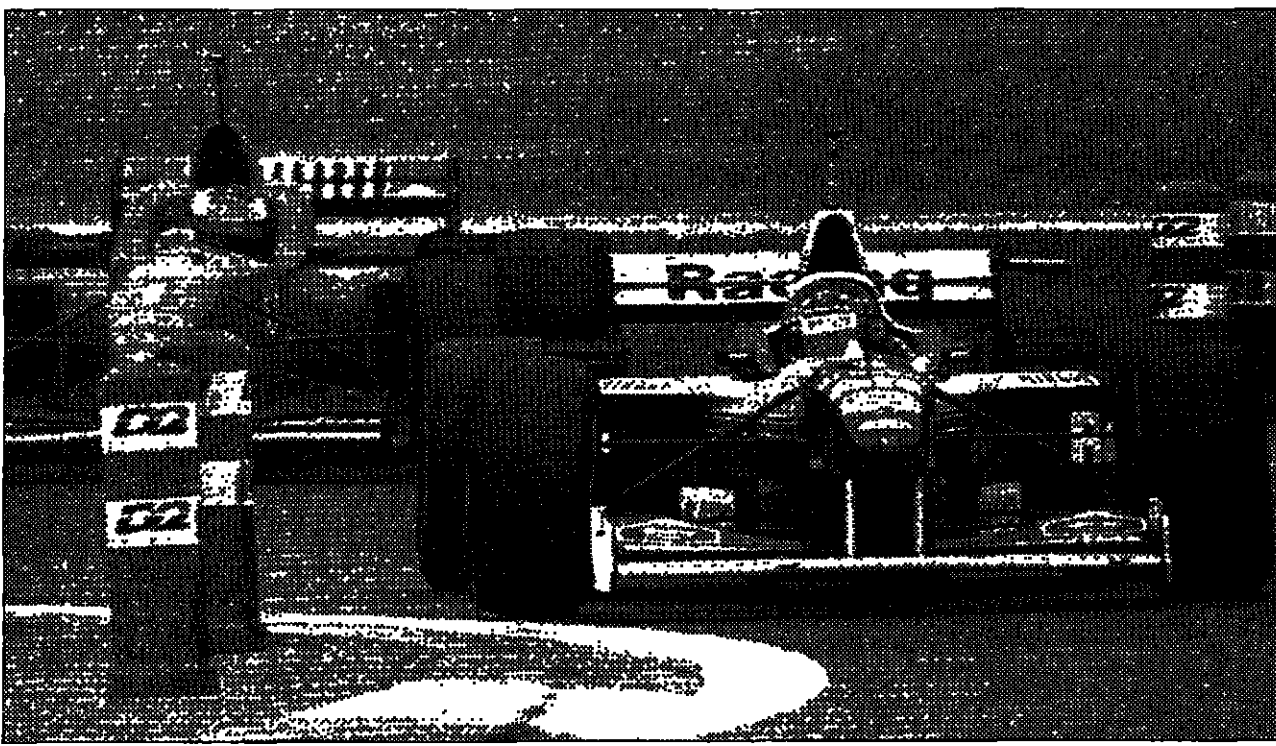
Roberto Baggio, who passed up the chance to play in the European Cup this

season when he left Juventus for Milan, said:

"At last, I get to play in the champions' cup, and that's a huge satisfaction."



SAVICEVIC AND BAGGIO CELEBRATE: Milan's Dejan Savicevic raises his arms to celebrate with Roberto Baggio the fourth Italian title in five years won by Milan Sunday. Milan, who have led Serie A from start to finish on points, now have an insurmountable nine-point lead over last season's champions Juventus (Reuters photo)



Canadian Jacques Villeneuve (right) and World Champion German Michael Schumacher (left) in action during the European Grand Prix at the Nuerburgring Sunday. Villeneuve won the race and Schumacher finished second

Villeneuve win reveals chinks in Hill armour

NUERBURGRING,

Germany (R) — Canadian Jacques Villeneuve's maiden victory in Sunday's European Grand Prix revealed weaknesses in current leader Damon Hill's racing repertoire.

As Villeneuve left the Nuerburgring to universal praise after holding off a strong challenge from double world champion Michael Schumacher's Ferrari in a thrilling finish, it became clear that his Williams team-mate had struggled to finish fourth.

David Coulthard was third in a McLaren.

Two drivers criticised Hill's driving as the Briton attempted to steer his Williams through the field on a recovery charge after a bad start and a 20-second pit-stop had left him trailing in 11th place.

Brazilian Rubens Barrichello, who finished less than a second behind

Hill in fifth place, said: "I had a good fight with Damon at the end, but he made some surprising moves."

"Sometimes he put the car in places that you would not expect him to. That damaged my line, but it damaged his too — and it seemed a strange thing to do."

Another Brazilian, Pedro Diniz, of Ligier, complained that Hill had not driven well when the pair collided on lap 28 of the 67-lap race as Hill fought for eighth position.

Diniz said: "When the other cars started to refuel, I moved up to eighth, ahead of a group led by Hill. On lap 28, he made an unexpected move to overtake me and came from quite a long way back."

"He seemed to brake very late, hit the kerb and could not turn in correctly. To avoid colliding with him, I was also forced to take to the gravel."

The incident with Diniz reminded some observers of

Hill's collisions with Schumacher in 1995, particularly at Silverstone and Monza. They suggested that he remains a less impressive racing driver in traffic and under pressure than he is when out in front and leading.

But Hill believes he was simply unlucky to suffer his combined misfortunes of a poor start, a long pit-stop in search of a puncture and his accident with Diniz — whom he claimed did not look in his mirrors and see him coming — on a circuit where it is difficult to overtake.

"I got by Michael (Schumacher) okay and was having problems with Rubens, but then suddenly the car began to feel strange and I was convinced that I had a puncture of something had broken," he said. "I pitted and that cost me a bit of time while they checked the car out."

For Villeneuve, who now lies 11 points behind Hill in the drivers' championship, the victory came in only his fourth race.

But Villeneuve was reluctant to criticise Hill or build up his own championship hopes. "This is only one race and there is a long way to go," he said. "We will have to work hard to stay competitive."

Schumacher's stirring drive for Ferrari buoyed up their hopes of another good result in next weekend's San Marino Grand Prix on their home track at Imola. The inspired German, like Villeneuve, played down his hopes.

"The fact that I was able to fight for the lead today does not mean that we have closed the gap to the Williams," he said.

"It only means that we are improving step by step in a methodical and planned fashion. We have a long way to go but we will get there."

Becker begins clay come-back

MUNICH, Germany

(Agencies) — Second-seeded Boris Becker claimed he was back in form after winning his first round at the \$425,000 clay-court Munich Open against Spain's Francisco Rigg on Tuesday 6-4, 6-4.

All eyes are on Becker's performance here, following his second round failure on clay in the recent Monte Carlo Open.

The circuit's penultimate clay-court event, the French Open, is less than four weeks away.

In Monte Carlo, Becker was beaten in the second round by Czech David Rikl. But even after the loss, Becker's confidence remained. "When I am on form, I can beat anyone on the clay," he said.

Here in Munich, Becker had the support of almost everyone in the stands at the Iphitos Club. The German world No. 5 needed one hour and 20 minutes to clinch the game against his 236th ranked opponent.

"It's nice to play here again," said the German, who is making only his third appearance in 13 years at the event in his adopted hometown.

"I'm satisfied with my form. It was not as easy as it looked. Roig had to win three matches in the qualifying round, so he had some experience already here."

Becker broke for 5-4 in the first set and served it out in the next game.

In the second set, the German favourite started with a break, saved four break points against his serve in the eighth game and claimed the win in the tenth game on a winning stretch forehand winner down the line.

Becker, along with

Croatian Goran Ivanisevic both received wild card entries after they stumbled at Monte Carlo last week in their 1996 clay court debuts.

Austrian Thomas Muster, the French Open title holder who is proving himself invincible on clay for a second consecutive year, was playing later in hopes of obtaining his 500th career victory. Muster was to open his Munich week with a match against Italy's Stefan Pescosolido.

Sixth seed Gilbert Schaller of Austria survived a sloppy first set to emerge with a 3-6, 6-0, 6-4 victory against German Carl-Uwe Steeb. Magnus Larsson, the 1994 Grand Slam Cup winner in Munich, took a 6-2, 6-4 loss against world No. 58 Argentine Hernan Gummy.

Larsson, a former top ten contender, has slipped to No. 71 in the rankings after injury in 1995.

Muster wins 3rd Monte Carlo title to join elite

Thomas Muster joined the elite of clay-court tennis when he beat Spaniard Alberto Costa in five tense sets to win his third title at the Monte Carlo Open tournament on Sunday — a feat only achieved before by Nicola Pietrangeli, Ilie Nastase and Bjorn Borg.

The Austrian, undisputed world number one on clay, had to battle for over three hours to dismiss the Spaniard, his Bete Noire, 6-3 5-7 4-6 6-3 6-2, and win his 37th tournament.

But Muster, winner here in 1992 and last year, could well have been beaten in a match in which both men found difficulty keeping their serves.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Operation ends Brolin's tough season

LONDON (R) — Tomas Brolin's troubled season with Leeds ended prematurely on Tuesday. The Swedish striker has been sidelined by a calf strain and has no chance of regaining fitness for Leeds' final two matches of the season — against Tottenham on Thursday and Coventry on Sunday. Manager Howard Wilkinson said: "In view of this, it has been decided that Tomas will fly home to Sweden to undergo the minor operation to his ankle, which was planned to take place after the end of the season." Brolin, a £4.5 million (\$6.8 million) signing from Parma in November, has struggled with form and fitness since arriving at Leeds.

Modahl back in competition

CARDIFF (AFP) — Diane Modahl announced on Tuesday that she is to run in the Welsh Games in Cardiff on Saturday, May 25. The former Commonwealth 800-metre champion, who will bid for an Olympic place after being cleared of all drugs charges, will contest a 600m, one of six invitation events during the Wales-Ireland-Croatia match. Meeting organiser, hurdler Colin Jackson said: "I'm pleased Diane is competing again. The British team missed her presence last summer. I respect her determination to carry on training and pursue her career, considering the difficult time she has had." Modahl sees the meeting as a good warm-up as she tries to refine world-class form. "I'm excited to be competing again. It will be the perfect event for me to test my training in the build-up to qualification for the Olympics"

Bulgarian fans throw snake at referee

SOFIA (R) — Bulgarian soccer fans threw a live snake at a referee after Saturday's first division clash between Levski Sofia and CSKA, officials said on Monday. It landed near Veselin Bogdanov as he left the pitch. A policeman clubbed it with his baton. The match, which CSKA won 1-0, ended with a punch-up in the tunnel leading to the dressing rooms. A policeman suffered a leg injury. The disciplinary committee of the Bulgarian Football Union was expected to discuss the incidents at a meeting later on Monday. The two clubs have a history of fierce rivalry. Eleven years ago a cup final between them ended in a brawl, and several players, including World Cup star Hristo Stoichkov, were banned from soccer for a year.

Brondby turn down Weah's cousin

COPENHAGEN (R) — Leading Danish club Brondby said on Tuesday it will not be signing the cousin of AC Milan's 1995 world player of the year George Weah. "We have no plans to see Sylla (Benmadi Muhammed) and are not interested in him," Brondby secretary Emil Bakkenhoff said. "Sylla has been approaching a lot of other Danish clubs and we have heard bad things about his general conduct." Danish media reports said Weah had recommended his cousin, a Guinean international, to the Copenhagen club.

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2) Nutcracker Prince Show: 11:00 a.m.		* Toy Story Shows at 11:00, 12:30, 3:00		Concord "2" Ace Ventura 2 Shows at 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30			
		* Sleeping in Honey (Arabic) Shows at 5:00 p.m.					

Sabonis leads Blazers to win over Jazz

PORTLAND (R) — Arvydas Sabonis scored 27 points but it was Buck Williams' putback of a Sabonis miss with 14 seconds left in overtime that snuffed a tie as the Portland Trail Blazers stayed alive with a 94-91 playoff victory Monday over the Utah Jazz.

Portland now trails Utah two games to one, with game four of the best-of-five opening round Western Conference series slated for Wednesday in Portland.

Rod Strickland added 19 points for the Trail Blazers, who blew a 13-point lead in the second half while playing their first playoff game at the New Rose Garden.

"We played hard, but we certainly didn't play well," said Strickland. "But we gutted it out and we got the victory."

Karl Malone scored 35 points and John Stockton added 13 for Utah.

Utah rallied at the end, taking advantage of Portland's ineptitude at the free throw line. The Blazers missed 4-of-6 free throws, three by Sabonis, in the final minute to open the door for the Jazz.

Portland shot just 27 of 46 from the charity stripe.

"We just couldn't seem to put the basketball in the net tonight but we won," Williams said about the poor foul shooting. "That's been our Achilles heel all year."

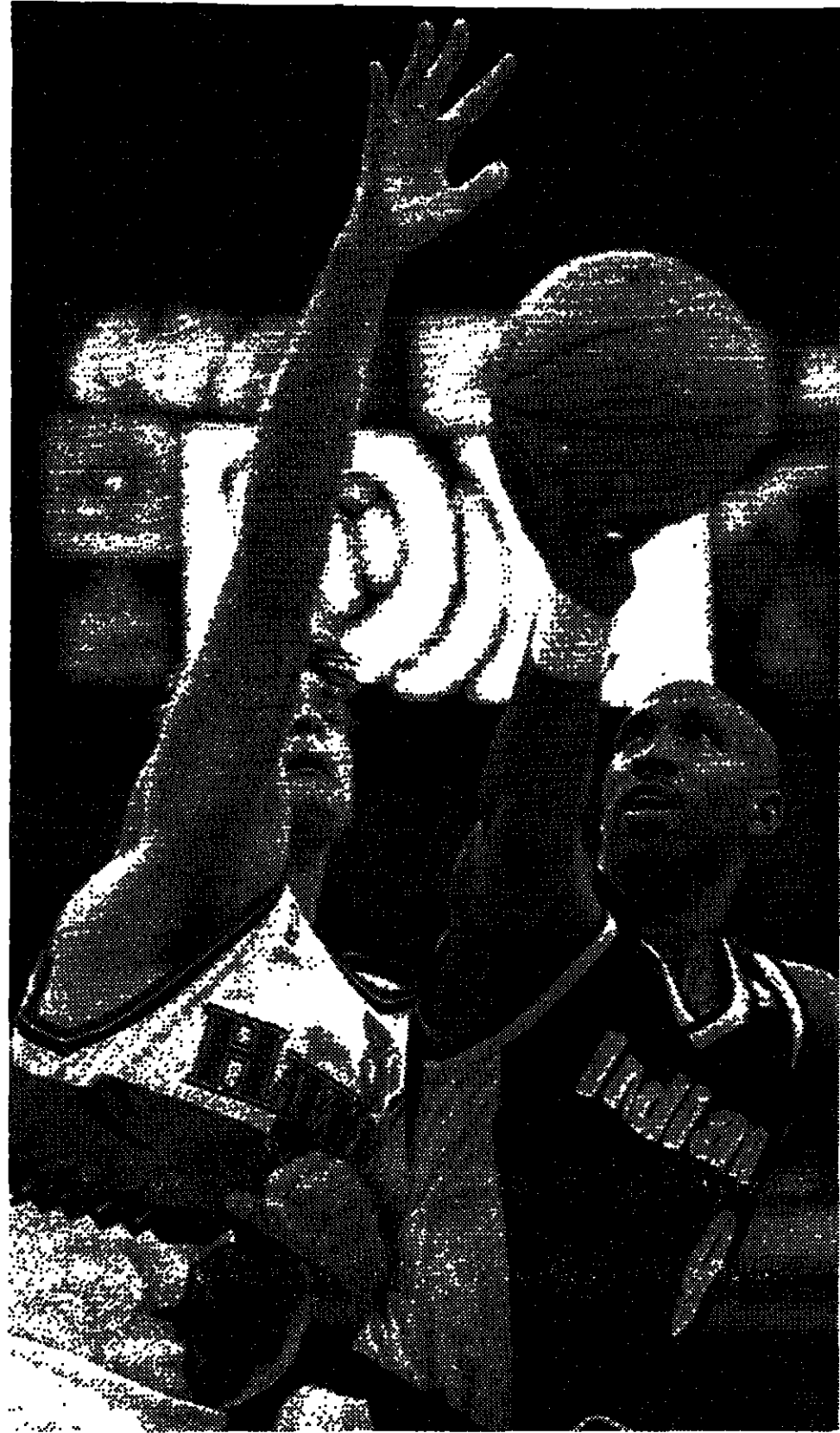
In Atlanta, the Atlanta Hawks closed the game with an 11-3 run and pushed the Indiana Pacers to the brink of playoff elimination with a 90-83 victory Monday in game three of their Eastern Conference first-round series.

The Hawks, led by Steve Smith with 26 points and Christian Laettner with 24, took a two games to one lead in the best-of-five series. Game four is Thursday in Atlanta.

Laettner gave Atlanta the lead for good at 81-80 with a seven-footer with 3:05 to play. Smith added a three-pointer as the shot clock expired with 91 seconds left and the Hawks held Indiana to one basket over the final 5:13.

"Time was running out, Christian drew a double-team, he got it out to me and the only thing I had left to do was really push it," Smith said about his key three. "I had a good chance to shoot it, and lucky for us it went in."

Derrick McKey and Rik Smits scored 13 points apiece for Indiana, which has advanced to the Eastern Conference finals the past



Indiana Pacers' Derrick McKey (right) attempts to shoot by the defence of Atlanta Hawks' Christian Laettner in the third quarter, at the Omni Monday during the first round of the NBA playoffs. The Hawks defeated the Pacers 90-83 (Reuters photo)

two seasons but has played the entire series without all-star guard Reggie Miller, who has a fractured eye socket.

"I don't worry about pressure and who's it on," said Indiana coach Larry Brown, whose team has eliminated the Hawks from the playoffs in each of the last two seasons.

"The responsibility of all of us is to be ready every single night. These guys grow up wanting to be in big games and now they have their chance."

The Pacers took an 80-79 lead when Antonio Davis capped a 7-0 run with a free throw at 3:58. Haywoode Workman brought Indiana within 84-83 on a three-pointer with 57 seconds left.

After a turnover by Atlanta, the Pacers had a chance to take the lead but Mark Jackson missed a 12-footer from the right wing. Smith was fouled during a scramble for a loose ball and made the second of two foul shots with 11 seconds remaining to give Atlanta a two-point lead.

Indiana got the ball back, but Ricky Pierce's pass intended for Jackson was stolen by Mookie Blaylock, who hit two free throws with 3.4 seconds left to seal the victory. Blaylock then stole the inbounds pass and buried a three-pointer as time expired.

Blaylock had 16 points, eight steals and seven assists.

"You have to give a lot of credit to Mookie Blaylock," added Smith. "He had a lot of steals, he's a thief. It was a storybook for him."

Franco becomes first lefty to record 300 saves in M-League

NEW YORK (R) — John Franco pitched a scoreless ninth inning to become the first left-hander in Major-League history to record 300 saves as the New York Mets beat the Montreal Expos 3-2 Monday in the opener of a three-game series.

Franco, who notched his fifth save of the season, struck out Darrin Fletcher to open the ninth. F.P. Santangelo reached on an infield single and took second base when third baseman Jeff Kent's throw skipped by the first baseman.

But Franco struck out Shane Andrews and then got pinch-hitter Sherman Obando to fly out to the warning track in right-center to end the game.

"I thought Obando got it," Franco said. "When it went off the bat, I was thinking, 'oh no, not tonight,' things go through your mind. I was thinking maybe he (Mets centre fielder Lance Johnson) lost it in the fog."

"Our club is tough," Expos manager Felipe Alou said. "Even with Mr. Franco getting his 300th save, the threat was there. This team does not quit."

Franco became the eighth player in Major-League history to reach 300 saves, doing it exactly 12 years after recording the first of his career for the Cincinnati

Reds against the San Francisco Giants.

Mets starter Pete Harnisch (2-2) allowed one unearned run and three hits in seven innings to gain the victory. Montreal starter Jeff Fassero (1-3) surrendered three runs and seven hits in six innings.

New York improved to 11-13, while first place Montreal slipped to 17-9.

In Los Angeles, Raul Mondesi broke out of a slump with three hits and five RBI and Ismael Valdes pitched into the eighth inning as the Los Angeles Dodgers belted the Chicago Cubs 10-4.

Mondesi, who entered the game hitless in his last 24 at-bats, singled and scored in the first inning. In the third Mondesi hit reliever Kevin Foster's first pitch into the left-field seats for a three-run homer, and he capped off his performance with a two-run single in the eighth.

Valdes (2-1) allowed four runs — three earned — and six hits. His era rose to 2.41.

Mike Piazza extended his hitting streak to 13 games with a solo homer to right-center field off Foster (3-2) to lead off the fifth. Piazza's homer was his fourth in the last 10 games after not homering over his first 16.

In San Diego, Joey Hamilton tossed a four-hitter for his fourth career

shutout and became the first five-game winner in the Major Leagues as the San Diego Padres defeated the Houston Astros 2-0.

Hamilton (5-1) walked one and struck out two in tossing his first shutout of the year.

Hamilton, who retired 11 straight batters between the fourth and seventh innings, faced just four batters over the minimum and allowed just two runners to reach second base.

"I felt good and was in a good groove all day," Hamilton said. "It was mostly location today. I was able to throw my pitches over for strikes."

Luis Lopez provided the run-support with a two-run homer in the bottom of the seventh inning.

In St. Louis, Tom Glavine allowed one run in 7 2/3 innings and Fred McGriff backed him with a two-run double to lead the Atlanta Braves to a 4-1 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals and a sweep of their three-game series.

Glavine (2-3) allowed seven hits, walked one and struck out seven as he snapped a personal three-game losing streak.

Mark Wohlers got the final four outs, striking out three, for his sixth save in as many chances for Atlanta (15-11).

White Sox win seventh in a row

CHICAGO (R) — Wilson Alvarez hurled seven solid innings and Ozzie Guillen scored a run and drove in another as the Chicago White Sox held off the California Angels 4-3 on Monday for their seventh straight victory.

Alvarez (2-2) allowed three runs and nine hits and struck out six. Roberto Hernandez struck out the side in the ninth inning for his ninth save for Chicago (15-9).

Rex Hudler had three hits for the Angels (12-12), who have lost four in a row following a seven-game winning streak. Jason Grimsley (1-1) allowed four runs and eight hits in 5 2/3 innings for the loss.

In Baltimore, B.J. Surhoff homered to break a seventh-inning tie as the Orioles snapped a three-game losing streak with an 8-7 victory over the Texas Rangers.

At Minnesota, Dave Hollins homered, doubled and drove in four runs and Paul Molitor had three hits and three RBI as the Minnesota Twins roared back from a 5-0 deficit for an 11-6 win over the Kansas City Royals.

National junior team returns from Bangkok after taking 8th place

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S NATIONAL Junior Women's Basketball team returned home Monday evening after taking eighth place in the Asian Junior Basketball Championship for Women which was held in Bangkok, Thailand April 21-28.

The Kingdom's team, the first and only Arab country to take part in such a championship, scored encouraging results in their inaugural competition on the Asian level.

The delegation to Bangkok was congratulated by HRH Princess Sarvath Al Hassan who has been an ardent supporter of the team and has kept a close watch on women's basketball since national teams made a comeback last summer following a 12-year absence.

Jordan's team to the championship placed eight after overcoming Hong Kong and Sri Lanka in the first round. On the final day

of competition, Jordan lost to Kyrgyzstan 71-39 to finish eighth among 12 competing teams.

The Kingdom's Hala Ghattas and Zina Farah were eighth among 12 top rebounders and Jordan's participation for the first time was highly appreciated by other delegations, especially Asian Basketball Confederation officials.

China won the title after overcoming Japan in the final five minutes of the second half to win the game 66-63 and take the sixth title.

Seven-time titleholders Korea placed third after managing a 77-76 win over Chinese Taipei. Hosts Thailand came in fifth as they beat India 74-66.

JBFA officials, family and friends of players welcomed the players back at Queen Alia International Airport. The players are now likely to take a month off from the game to return to school and university examinations before they join their

respective teams in the league championship scheduled for July.

At the conclusion of the championship, Japan's Miki Satom received the \$1,000 top playmaker award while China's Miao Lijie who assisted her team in overcoming Japan in the final was chosen the tournament's most valuable player.

Chinese coach Ma Yuenan was chosen as the most valuable coach and also received \$1,000.

Final standings after the championship:

1- China 2- Japan 3- South Korea 4- Chinese Taipei 5- Thailand 6- India 7- Kyrgyzstan 8- Jordan 9- Malaysia 10- Sri Lanka 11- Philippines 12- Hong Kong.

Snippets from Bangkok • The Kingdom's team was the centre of attraction in the friendship night dinner party organised by the Thai Basketball Association. At a suggestion that each delegation

present a song representing its country, the Kingdom's team sang 'Hashimi Hashimi' and invited all players to dance. The Jordanian players thus created an unforgettable atmosphere where each delegation came up with a traditional song or dance creating a fraternal atmosphere that for one day in the championship put aside competition, victories and defeats.

• In a show of sportsmanship, the Sri Lankan team who lost to Jordan in the final second, were the only team who saw off the Kingdom's delegation as they left the hotel for Bangkok International Airport. The Sri Lankan team, like Jordan's women's team in the Asian Women's Championship in Japan last summer, had come to Thailand after players came up with their own fundraising campaign to make it to the games.

Police arrest Euro 96 ticket touters

LONDON (AFP) — Police raided 12 ticket outlets on Tuesday, including the offices of a company run by former England test bowler Bob Willis, arresting 11 people for illegal sales of Euro 96 tickets.

Tickets for the European Football Championships tournament, being staged in June, have yet to be distributed in Britain.

It is an offence under the criminal justice act to tout tickets for football matches, with a maximum £5,000 (\$8,300) penalty. A woman was arrested during the raid on Willis' National Sporting Club, which occupies the penthouse suite at London's Cafe Royal.

She was among a number

of people arrested as a total of 80 officers mounted simultaneous raids across the English capital as a part of operation potent.

Mr. Willis denied any knowledge of wrongdoing, saying he believed his office had applied for, received and were intending to resell the tickets on an entirely legitimate basis.

His club was also offering places for the FA Cup final at prices up to £800.

The National Sporting Club, which has been operated under licence by the Willis brothers for the last five years, was offering champagne deals for the opening game in the Euro 96 championships for £300.

The Football Association

(FA) said over recent years it had taken its own action against touts connected to the cup final, imposing fines and bans.

"In recent months, the metropolitan police through its Euro 96 intelligence unit has asked for our support and we've readily given it. Today's action is the first result," the FA said.

The Football Association said it welcomed and supported the police operation.

"Ticket touting is illegal. It's not in the interests of all those who care about football," it said in a statement.

"It's highly damaging for our game, not least as we approach Euro 96 when the eyes of millions across Europe and further afield

will be on this country.

"Ticket touting means greed and exploitation. It puts at risk all efforts to segregate rival supporters and thus ensure safety and security."

Further operations are planned as the countdown continues to the biggest sporting event in England for 30 years.

"We stress again that all tickets can be traced back to those who originally received them," indicated the FA.

The association also warned those tempted to purchase tickets from touts that they could be forged or stolen — and receiving them may be illegal.

**TWO THOUSAND
LANDMINES
GET CLEARED THIS
WAY
EVERY MONTH.**



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC)
LANDMINES MUST BE STOPPED

Clinton's pitching for Peres raises eyebrows

TEL AVIV (R) — Bill Clinton's effusive backing for visiting Prime Minister Shimon Peres has sparked charges the U.S. leader is meddling in Israeli politics with elections in the Jewish state barely a month away.

"We begin this evening with an unprecedented mobilisation of support — such as has never been known in the past — by a U.S. president in favour of an electoral candidate in a democratic country," said Israel Channel Two anchor Yaacov Alon, opening the television's nightly newscast late on Monday.

Mr. Clinton was shown with Mr. Peres enjoying the cheers of a U.S. Jewish lobbying group in Washington. "Our friend Shimon Peres is carrying on the important work of peace with security," Mr. Clinton said, to thunderous applause.

"I salute again the prime minister for the strength and commitment he has shown for pursuing the peace in this difficult period."

Army radio called it a "full-blown Peres campaign speech."

Mr. Clinton, himself facing reelection in a November vote, has staked much of his foreign policy prestige on the fabled Middle East peace process, the troubled centerpiece of Mr. Peres' career.

Peace hopes hit further trouble this month, when Mr. Peres, under pressure to combat recurrent Hizbollah guerrilla Katyusha rocket attacks, unleashed Israel's fiercest air and artillery onslaught in Lebanon in weeks.

A ceasefire, wrung from the parties through the extensive shuttle efforts of Mr. Clinton's Secretary of State Warren Christopher, was widely seen as throwing a lifeline to Mr. Peres' campaign for reelection in the May 29 poll.

Mr. Clinton defended the Lebanon campaign, even putting a pro-Peres spin on Israel's shelling of a U.N. base, which killed more than 100 refugees huddling there for shelter.

He said the deaths of Lebanese children in the base were the result of "the deliberate tactics of Hizbollah in their positioning and firing" from the area.

U.S. officials have been

careful to say they will maintain the close alliance with Israel no matter who wins in May.

But Mr. Peres was plainly grateful for Mr. Clinton's seeming endorsement, coming hard on the heels of Sunday's eye-catching U.S.-Israeli pact on developing a Katyusha-killing laser.

Mr. Peres told Israeli reporters it was "the most far-reaching of (all) speeches on America's commitments to Israel."

Not to be outdone by Mr. Clinton's commendation, Peres praised the president as "a great leader of the free world."

It was as though they were saying to each other, "if only it were you that will be re-elected," said Israel Channel One U.S. correspondent Yaacov Ahimeir.

Riding the sympathy that followed the assassination of his predecessor Yitzhak Rabin, Mr. Peres seemed all but certain of victory until two months ago, when Hamas suicide bombers launched a wave of attacks in Israel, killing a total of 59 people in nine days.

The bloodshed left Israelis angry and fearful, and cost Mr. Peres his entire landslide lead in opinion polls over hardline Likud challenger Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mr. Clinton soon stepped in to help turn the tide back in Mr. Peres' favour by convening an anti-guerrilla summit in Egypt, in which the Israeli prime minister played a starring role.

The U.S.-Israel agreement signed on Sunday is aimed at bolstering Israel's missile defences by relaying instant satellite images of enemy launches and stepping up work on a new laser weapon capable of destroying Katyusha rockets.

Mr. Peres and Defence Secretary William Perry signed a joint statement on missile defence cooperation. "Relations between the United States and Israel are at their best," Mr. Peres told a news conference following the signing of the statement of intent.

The military agreement calls for continued work on the Arrow weapon system that will provide Israel with an enhanced defence against ballistic missiles, Mr. Perry

said. The United States also agreed to help develop a new laser weapon, the Nautilus, to help Israel defend itself against Katyusha rocket attacks, Mr. Perry said.

The new weapon will cost \$70 million to build over three years, said Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon. Israel has agreed to contribute \$20 million to the overall cost.

Deployment of the system is expected to begin at the end of 1997, Mr. Perry said.

But a team of Pentagon specialists will travel to Israel next week to examine ways to immediately strengthen Israel's defences against short-range rockets while the Nautilus system is under development.

Mr. Bacon said the United States was considering the delivery to Israel of Phalanx guns, usually used on warships to shoot down missiles.

The United States will also provide Israel satellite images of launches from enemy positions "on a systematic and timely basis," Mr. Perry said.

"Warning will be given in a matter of seconds of a missile launch," he added.

The agreement heralded a closer military relationship between Israel and the United States but Mr. Perry said that the measures should not be viewed as aggressive posturing on behalf of the two countries.

"It should be clear to all countries that the provisions to provide warning data and the provisions to provide the defence protection is not an aggressive action," Mr. Perry said.

"It is an action to help provide defence," he stated, adding that tighter U.S.-Israeli cooperation should have a "stabilising" effect in the region.

The pact however fell short of Mr. Peres' request for a formal defence alliance between the United States and Israel that would ease Israeli concerns over its security as it considers withdrawals.

Syria has made an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights a condition for a peace agreement and Hizbollah guerrillas are fighting to drive Israeli troops out of South Lebanon.



CANA VICTIMS BURIED: Coffins of victims of an April 17 Israeli assault on South Lebanon are being carried to a mass funeral in Cana village in South Lebanon on Tuesday (see page 1) (Reuters photo)

EU leader Italy seeks to push peace process

ROME (R) — Italian Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli said on Tuesday that she would pay a fresh visit to the Middle East this week on behalf of the European Union (EU) to press the search for peace in the region.

Ms. Agnelli told reporters after meeting ambassadors from Arab League countries that her visit would take her to Cairo, Amman and Beirut. Aides said she would travel on Saturday and Sunday.

The minister, who visited Lebanon and Syria 10 days ago, promised that Italy as holder of the EU presidency would continue its "relentless support for the promotion of Middle East peace on the Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian tracks."

Her latest visit follows a U.S.-brokered ceasefire which took effect on Saturday, ending 16 days of Israeli

attacks in southern Lebanon. It also follows a decision by the Palestinian National Council (PNC) to scrap articles from its charter calling for the elimination of Israel.

Ms. Agnelli said the South Lebanon ceasefire had to be consolidated "on solid ground" through resumed negotiations between Israel, Lebanon and Syria aimed at building a comprehensive peace.

She also urged Israel to respond positively to the PNC decision by reopening its borders with Palestinian self-rule areas, closed since March, and withdrawing its troops from the West Bank town of Hebron.

Diplomats who attended the closed-door meeting said the ambassadors told Ms. Agnelli their biggest concern was that the ceasefire between Israel and Hizbollah

would not hold. The diplomats said the ambassadors also asked that Italy and the EU lead a "big push" for peace in the region.

In a speech delivered to the ambassadors, Ms. Agnelli said Italy believed progress in the peace process could be achieved only with full participation of Arab countries.

"We believe that it is very important, as in the past, to have a close exchange of opinions with the moderate Arab countries that you all represent," she said, according to a text released by the ministry.

"We believe ... this coordination is very much needed, now more than ever, in order to ensure a lasting and just peace in the Middle East."

Ms. Agnelli also referred to the fact that the Lebanon-Israel ceasefire was brokered

by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, despite her visit to the Middle East and that of a high-level EU delegation during the recent fighting.

"In front of different peace plans, in particular the American one, we thought that the best contribution which we could give to end the hostilities was not to propose still another plan, but to focus all our efforts on coordinating the different initiatives," she said.

Ms. Agnelli was asked to comment on separate efforts by EU partner France to negotiate the ceasefire. French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette has claimed credit for 80 per cent of the ideas in the accord.

"I don't think it's important to find peace, but that peace is found," Ms. Agnelli said.

France claims credit for most of Lebanon truce

PARIS (R) — France, resuming diplomatic sniping at Washington, on Monday claimed credit for 80 per cent of the ideas in the U.S.-brokered ceasefire in South Lebanon.

Foreign Minister Herve de Charette said the April 27 truce ending a 16-day Israeli blitz against Hizbollah guerrillas in South Lebanon was "a good understanding, based largely on French proposals."

"Eighty per cent of the text comes from ideas which we ourselves expressed," he told a news conference of his two-week mission that was staged by a week-long peace shuttle by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Lebanon lost 200 dead and 400 wounded, most of them women and children, in the attacks.

Mr. De Charette said the only non-French ideas were the creation of a consultative group for the reconstruction of Lebanon and a clause stating the accord "shall not preclude any party from exercising the right of self-defence."

He said the idea for a group for Lebanese reconstruction, to comprise France, the European Union, Russia and other interested

parties, was "a very good idea" by Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, in the United States and due to visit France on Wednesday, has lavished praise on Mr. Christopher and said on Sunday that "relations between the United States and Israel are at their best."

Mr. De Charette said France had "received the fruits of its initiative," through the mere fact of the ceasefire.

The minister said France had restored its diplomatic credentials in the Middle East. President Jacques Chirac pledged support to Lebanon's sovereignty on a trip to Beirut only days before the fighting broke out between Israel and Hizbollah guerrillas.

Mr. De Charette conceded on Friday that his mission had "provoked a certain irritation, notably for the Americans." Israel had made it clear it preferred American mediation.

France has also come under fire from European Union (EU) partners for going it alone despite its frequent calls for a more effective joint EU foreign policy.

Peres says Iran to have nuclear arms in 4 years

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Iran has the potential to possess nuclear weapons in four years, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said late Monday, adding that Israel would not necessarily launch a pre-emptive strike against Iran.

"I believe that in four years they may reach nuclear weapons," Mr. Peres told ABC Television during an interview.

Mr. Peres, who was scheduled to meet with President Bill Clinton on Tuesday, said there is a race between "two convoys" in the Middle East.

One is "the fundamentalistic one which wants to mobilise the Muslim world against Israel to destroy it, that uses terror, that tries to acquire non-conventional arms."

The other is "ours which is a convey of creating a new strategy, creating a new coalition."

"I think we have only four years to win this race or to lose it," Mr. Peres said.

Asked if he would launch an air raid against Iran's nuclear facilities as then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin ordered in 1981 against Iraq, Mr. Peres said the same thing would "not necessarily" happen.

"I would rather see an ear-

lier attempt to intercept this danger," Mr. Peres said.

Mr. Peres could not say with certainty that former Soviet scientists or military people with nuclear knowledge are now working with the Iranians, but he voiced concern over the 150 Russian experts there trying to build a civilian nuclear capacity.

"The difference is so thin and so worrying. And it is because of it that I think that a united policy by the Western world and the Russians to prevent the Iranians from having a combination of a fundamentalistic movement and a nuclear capacity is essential," the prime minister said.

"It is better to prevent it by an economic pressure than by a military confrontation," he added.

'Iran behind Lockerbie bomb'

A senior Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official has said that Iran, and not Libya, was behind the December 1988 bombing of a U.S. jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, the German weekly Focus reported Monday.

COLUMN 8

Ghostbuster finds no apparition but getting warm

LONDON (R) — A ghostbuster hunting for phantoms of the opera in London's famed Royal Albert Hall found no ghosts in his all-night vigil but insists he did detect signs of "paranormal activity." Andrew Green, called in after sightings of a ghostly organist and two laughing Victorian ladies, spent Monday night pacing the cavernous halls and corridors of the concert hall. Equipped with cameras and recording equipment, he noted a sharp rise in temperature in one room. "We saw nothing, unfortunately. We heard nothing, unfortunately. But we did come across a very remarkable change in temperature," he said after his night chasing apparitions. "It was near an open window so you would have expected the temperature to fall during the night. Instead, in a matter of seconds it rose from 72 degrees Fahrenheit to 82 degrees Fahrenheit. That itself is an example of paranormality." Green, a former civil servant, was called in to investigate the hall in the hope of catching sight of two women dressed in 19th century clothing who are said to appear every year. They have been depicted as laughing and excited, wearing low-cut dark dresses as they cross the foyer and vanish before reaching the staff cafeteria. The paranormal investigator, was also hoping to chase Father Willis, a 19th century organ maker believed to appear every time work is done on the hall's giant organ.

Tears greet China success of U.S. film

BEIJING (R) — Hollywood blockbuster The Bridges of Madison County is moving Chinese audiences to floods of tears, cinema officials and state media said. A survey of Beijing cinema-goers found 47.6 per cent wept during the film, which has set a box office record in the Chinese capital since opening on April 19, the Beijing Youth Daily said. But 80 per cent of women who watched U.S. actors Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep play passionate lovers in the film said they believed a stable marriage and family ties were more important than a brief illicit romance, the newspaper said. Beijing has long limited the number of foreign films shown in China to protect its struggling domestic industry from competition from big-budget imports and to help counter their perceived corrosive impact on society. Evening performances of The Bridges of Madison County were still packed and tears were plentiful, despite the higher than normal ticket price of 30 yuan (\$3.60), said Cui Manhua of Beijing's Zi-guang Cinema. Cinema tickets usually cost a maximum of 10 yuan.

Beijing hails 6 months of anti-porn efforts

BEIJING (R) — China's capital trumpeted the success of a continuing anti-pornography campaign, saying authorities had seized hundreds of thousands of pornographic and other illegal materials. Police in Beijing had confiscated 9,651 video tapes, 8,237 cassette tapes, 207,046 books and 354,982 compact discs and laser discs with pornographic or other illegal content during raids at 14 publishing houses and electronics stores, the Beijing Daily and Xinhua News Agency said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Celebrations blamed for Libya forest fires

CAIRO (AP) — The Libyan government urged holiday picnickers to take care with fires after blazes fanned by strong winds damaged forests along the nation's Mediterranean coast. The state-run JANA news agency said Tuesday that summer heat, high winds and picnic campfires were responsible for several fires in recent days. The agency, monitored in Cairo, said fires ravaged forests in Gas Ban Gashir, a suburb of the Libyan capital Tripoli, and stands of trees in the towns of Garabuli and Tajura to the East. Woods at Sobrata, site of ancient Roman ruins to the west of the capital, also were destroyed, JANA said. The fires came during the four-day 'Eid Al Adha, which many Libyans celebrate outdoors. The holiday ends Wednesday. Libyan officials urged citizens to "abstain from igniting fires for the making of food, tea and barbecues so that such activity does not lead to forest fires," JANA said.

Turkish troops kill 12 rebel Kurds

ANKARA (R) — Turkish troops killed 12 Kurdish guerrillas in a clash in the southeast, Anatolian news agency reported on Tuesday. A statement from the emergency rule governor's office in Diyarbakir, received by the agency, said 12 Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels had been killed in Sirtak province. It did not say when the clash took place. The agency said 49 PKK members were captured in southeastern provinces. Nearly 19,000 people have been killed in the PKK's 12-year fight for independence or autonomy in southeast Turkey.

Fire damages ancient Coptic church

CAIRO (AP) — Fire damaged the interior of a 13th century Coptic church south of Cairo, and police were investigating whether it was set by Muslim extremists. The blaze erupted late Monday in the Abu Al Sayfayn Church, which is inside the monastery of the virgin in the town of Al Azab, about 80 kilometres south of the capital. The altar, priceless icons and old wooden benches were destroyed, police said. They estimated the damage at 500,000 Egyptian pounds (\$150,000). Police initially said they believed an electrical short ignited the fire but later said they were investigating the possibility of arson. Extremists have targeted churches in the past as part of their nearly four-year campaign of violence aimed at toppling the government and replacing it with a strict Islamic regime. The monastery complex, which includes several shrines as well as dormitories for nuns and pilgrims, dates to the 13th century. Abu Al Sayfayn church holds the tomb of Anba Abram, a Coptic saint. Annual festivals are held to honour the Virgin Mary.

S. Africa denies it hosts Hizbollah training bases

JOHANNESBURG (Agencies) — South Africa denied on Monday that any pro-Iranian Hizbollah guerrillas were training at bases in the country, as Israeli security officials allege. "That's just unthinkable," said Parks Mankahlana, a spokesman for President Nelson Mandela. Israel's state-run radio quoted unnamed security officials as saying Hizbollah had five bases in South Africa and another in Nigeria. South Africa's ambassador to Israel said he would convey the "worrying reports" to his government after Israeli officials spoke to him.

Bosnia clashes claim 4

SIENINA (AP) — A Bosnian Serb was killed in recent confrontations with Muslim refugees trying to visit former homes. Bosnian Serbs said Tuesday.

The death raised the recent toll to four.

SRNA, the Bosnian Serb news agency, said the Serb died Monday near Doboj, where two Muslims were earlier reported to have lost their lives while trying to cross a minefield. Another Muslim died after being wounded in a clash with Serbs near Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital.

There was no independent confirmation of the SRNA report, which offered no details.

Another 20 people were hurt in the minefield and in Sarajevo, and NATO's commander of ground forces, Lieutenant-General Michael Walker, said political leaders are to blame.

"I sincerely hope that today's tragic events... will shock the local and national officials who have the duty to guarantee the safety and freedom of movement for all citizens into responsible action," he said.

He said the NATO force will do what it can, but it is not in the business of crowd control.

Bosnian Prime Minister Hasan Muratovic urged the NATO-led force to secure freedom of movement and denied suggestions that his government was orchestrating the confrontations by urging emotional Muslim refugees to try and return to their homes at all costs.

Until Monday, no one had been killed in showdowns between would-be returnees and their former enemies who do not want them coming back.

The U.S.-brokered agreement that ended the war provided no clear way to enforce

Hebron is tense as Israel prepares withdrawal

HEBRON (AP) — As the ferris wheel in a dusty Hebron parking lot turned Monday, a group of Palestinian children riding it chanted the name of a militant blamed for the bombing deaths of scores of Israelis.

"Yahya Ayash," they screamed and giggled, "Yahya Ayash."

Two blocks away, Jewish children played on a kindergarten merry-go-round under the watchful eye of Israeli soldiers.

Tension fills the air in Hebron — the last West Bank city under Israeli control. After 29 years of occupation, Israel is due to pull its troops out of much of the city sometime in May.

But the pullout may only worsen relations between the city's 120,000 Palestinian residents and the 450 Jewish settlers living in their midst. Israeli officials warn of the potential for new violence in Hebron.

"This is the most problematic area," said Shlomo Dror, a coordinator for Israeli activities in the West

Bank.

Under the withdrawal plan, 85 per cent of Hebron will be turned over to Palestinian control, while Israel will maintain control over the other 15 per cent — including six Jewish enclaves and the Ibrahim Mosque, a site holy to both Judaism and Islam.

The Jewish enclaves, however, are interspersed throughout the heart of the city. Some 15,000 Palestinian residents will remain under Israeli control even after the pullout, Mr. Dror said.

In a microcosm of the bypass roads Israel has built around other Palestinian cities in the West Bank, Israeli troops on Monday blocked off a street to build a wooden foot bridge connecting two Jewish enclaves so soldiers and settlers won't have to walk by Palestinian homes.

Palestinians say they want the settlers out of Hebron along with Israeli troops, but the settlers say they will never leave. The enmity between the two groups only hardened after settler Baruch Gold-

stein gunned down at least 30 Palestinians at the Ibrahim Mosque in February 1994.

Shani Horowitz, a mother of seven, has lived in Beit Hadassah enclave of Hebron for 14 years. In a long denim dress, her head covered by a crocheted scarf in keeping with observant Jewish tradition, she peeled potatoes at her kitchen sink Monday and said she was not worried about the pullout.

"Our plans are to stay here forever," she said.

Nabil Halaby, a 44-year-old clothes merchant who lives in a two-story home directly behind Mrs. Horowitz, had a different view. "Our lives will not be better until all the settlers are gone," the father of 10 said.

Mr. Halaby said his family hid eight Jewish families in 1929 after riots broke out in the city and 67 Jews killed by Arabs. The remaining Jewish residents were evacuated after the incident.

Mr. Halaby said the Jews who came back to Hebron after Israel gained control of the West Bank in the 1967

Mideast war only harass the Arabs, and he wants them out.

A window that used to face the Jewish compound next door has been boarded up by order of the Israeli army, Mr. Halaby said.

"The army closed it for security reasons, so that we won't hurt the Jews," Mr. Halaby said. "Now we are living in a graveyard. We cannot go out on our rooftops, we hardly see the sky because of the settlers."

Israel was to pull out of Hebron in March but postponed the withdrawal after a series of suicide bombings claimed by militants killed 59 victims in Israel in February and March.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said this week that no date for the redeployment had been finalised but would take place before Israel's May 29 election.

David Wilder, director of the Hebron Jewish community, said the withdrawal will be "a total catastrophe."